

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT LXXI

MARGIN FOR ERROR

On March 19, 1941, we received instructions to determine the audience acceptance value of Clare Booth's *MARGIN FOR ERROR*, cast with Sam Levene, Otto Preminger, Florence Rice and Dennis O'Keefe.

On March 28 we telegraphed the following report:

"First returns indicate that *MARGIN FOR ERROR* with Levene, Preminger, Rice and O'Keefe would be lucky to reach eighty per cent on RKO Classification. Many theatregoers object that the story 'doesn't sound like comedy.' Audience acceptance would undoubtedly be higher without Nazi element."

The names of the proposed cast are unknown to all except a small minority of theatregoers. Levene, Preminger, Rice and O'Keefe have a combined marquee value which is hardly above zero. It was no surprise therefore to find that only seven per cent of those persons who voted for the picture gave a reason in terms of cast.

The Nazi element in this property is generally considered to be incompatible with the comedy element. Our synopsis tried to convey your intention to make the picture chiefly for comedy, but time and again respondents complained "it doesn't sound like comedy".

There was also a sprinkling of unfavorable comments to the effect that the story was *propaganda*. Anything which mentions Nazis seems to produce this reaction nowadays. (If the reader has seen our communications dated April 2 and April 16 on the attitude of theatregoers towards Nazi subjects he will understand why this element in *MARGIN FOR ERROR* spoils its acceptance value).

MARGIN FOR ERROR received more votes proportionately from those who had seen the play on Broadway than from others, but not enough persons saw the play for their votes to tip the scale at the box-office.*

MARGIN FOR ERROR, as cast, is stronger with males than with females. It is considerably stronger with persons in the top income levels than with the great mass of ordinary theatregoers. It is strongest of all in New York City.

Princeton, May 5, 1941.

MARGIN FOR ERROR

Based on Clara Booth's comedy thriller. Action centers about a cruel Nazi Consul in New York, his pretty niece, a newspaper columnist who loves her, and an East Side policeman. How the Consul tries to cover up his crimes by staging a suicide for someone else—then gets caught in his own trap.

* Played Plymouth Theatre 194 evenings and 65 matinees, seating capacity 1,057—total *maximum* attendance 273,763.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT LXXII

EFFECT OF WAR ON THEATRE ATTENDANCE IN ENGLAND

In November 1938 the British Institute of Public Opinion (founded by Dr. George Gallup) asked a representative cross-section of the population of the United Kingdom: "How often do you go to the cinema?" In February 1941 the same question was repeated. Comparison of the results shows a marked decline in frequency of attendance:

49%	51%	39%	61%
once a week	less than	once a week	less than
and up	once a week	and up	once a week

November 1938

February 1941

When asked whether they were going to the cinema as much now as before the war, 38 per cent replied in the negative. The following chief occupations were given as the alternative method of spending leisure time:

	%
Reading	19
Listening to radio	14
Knitting	14
Stay at home, activity not specified	17
Social Activities (cards, pubs, clubs)	8
National Service	16
Working longer hours	12
	100

Princeton, May 10, 1941.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT LXXIII

WRAPPED IN CELLOPHANE II

In REPORT XLIV, dated February 12, 1941, we communicated our finding that WRAPPED IN CELLOPHANE with George Raft would start with a box-office expectancy of only 70 per cent on the RKO Classification.

At that time we found little *vocal* criticism of any particular element in the story—simply a general lack of interest. You will recall that we diagnosed this apathy as being due to lack of interest in horse-racing as a back-ground for a motion picture. We documented this diagnosis with figures on the readership of horse-racing news in newspapers, and also on the box-office record of previous pictures with this background. We quoted two comments which were typical of those recorded by our interviewers: "*This is just one of those damned horse-racing pictures*" and "*This has been shown over and over again—I've seen a million of these.*"

Six weeks later we were instructed to repeat our study of WRAPPED IN CELLOPHANE, using George Sanders in place of George Raft, and adding Jane Wyatt. The following preliminary report was telegraphed on May 16th:

"WRAPPED IN CELLOPHANE with George Sanders and Jane Wyatt emerges below 70 per cent on RKO Classification. This result due more to basic weakness of story than to the admittedly limited marquee value of the cast. Even the train element does not compensate for general lack of interest in horse-racing and the widespread reaction that the story is obvious and trite. See REPORT XLIV."

Inasmuch as the marquee value of Sanders is rather less than half the marquee value of Raft (see Fifth Audit) it was hardly to be expected that the substitution of Sanders for Raft would increase the picture's box-office expectancy.

In the circumstances it is gratifying to be able to report that when the picture is cast with Sanders it declines only a few percentage points. That the decline is not greater is probably due to the fact that theatergoers had considered Raft miscast as Johnny Virginia.

Even so it is impossible to be optimistic. It does not now look as good as 70 per cent on your Classification, which means that it is in a class with DANCE GIRL DANCE. Whether WRAPPED IN CELLOPHANE could be made cheaply enough to return a profit at that level is a point upon which we are not competent to express an opinion.

From our viewpoint the greatest argument in favor of making it is that it would place Sanders in an American role, and that is something he seems to need rather badly (see REPORT LX). Whether the resultant gain to Sanders would ultimately benefit RKO is something else again; we don't know whether there is a contract.

Princeton, May 17, 1941.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT LXXIV

CYRANO II

On May 18, 1940, we reported that the lack of audience interest in CYRANO DE BERGERAC was mainly due to these five factors:

1. Only 20 per cent of all theatergoers (one in five) had ever heard of CYRANO.
2. Most of those persons who knew about CYRANO owed their knowledge to the presence of this play on their high-school curriculum: "It just doesn't appeal—I *had to study it in school.*"
3. The story is not only a costume piece (*'Kneepants'*), but it also suffered from the fact that it is set in a period in which theatergoers appear to be little interested.
4. The background is foreign, and a foreign background is a powerful obstacle to that process of self-identification upon which most motion pictures depend for their success.
5. Few theatergoers can pronounce the *title* without embarrassment, and this fact is likely to impede the momentum of word-of-mouth.

At that time we predicted that CYRANO DE BERGERAC with Orson Welles was not likely to exceed 90 per cent on the RKO Classification.

On April 25, 1941, we were instructed to repeat our poll on this picture, in order to determine whether the reaction of the theatergoing public showed any change. Twelve days later, on May 7th, we telegraphed the following preliminary report:

"We find mounting curiosity in Orson Welles but very little interest in CYRANO DE BERGERAC as a story. The vote for Welles in CYRANO is predominately a vote for Welles himself and not an indorsement of the story. Urge Welles to find another story which would *help* him instead of the reverse. If however you decide to make CYRANO I suggest changing title to something more universally pronounceable and containing more obvious implications of swashbuckle. Only twenty per cent of all U.S. theatergoers have ever heard of CYRANO and most of these think of it as school homework, so the value of the publicity and goodwill residing in the property cannot be very considerable. Remember average family income of all U.S. theatergoers is less than \$30."

We find that *CYRANO* with Orson Welles rates 25 per cent higher today than it did twelve months ago. On the basis of this result we estimate that the picture would do 100 per cent on the RKO Classification if it were released today, and if its publicity penetration were average.

These are two big if's, and in this case they invalidate any prediction even before it is made. Why? Because it is absurd to assume that the publicity for anything connected with Welles could be average, and also because the picture is not being released today, but at some point in the future.

The theatergoers interviewed in our poll have not yet seen Orson Welles in *CITIZEN KANE* or, for that matter, in any other picture. Nobody can be certain what effect *CITIZEN KANE* is going to have on Welles' power-to-sell-tickets. That it will have a considerable effect one way or the other appears almost inevitable—because not until theatergoers have seen Welles will they know what they are voting on. At present the attitude to Welles is still primarily one of *curiosity*, currently being fanned by heavy publicity.

It is almost certainly the effect of this publicity which accounts for the increased vote for Welles in *CYRANO*. The story has not changed, and there is no external factor which could have changed public reaction to it. Indeed, we find the same general reactions to the story as we found last year. (See above.)

It is interesting to study the variations in the vote for *CYRANO*. The picture rates high with persons whose income is in excess of \$50 per month* but falls away abruptly as the income and educational status decline.

It is also comparatively high in New York City, Philadelphia and Chicago (but not in San Francisco).

Why should this picture do so much better in the big metropolitan centers than in the rest of the Country? In New York the explanation might be that our interviewing was conducted between May 1st and May 5th, when the New York press was raving about *CITIZEN KANE*. But *CITIZEN KANE* did not open in Chicago until May 6th and it has not yet been seen in Philadelphia. Evidently there must be some other explanation for *CYRANO*'s high acceptance value in these cities. It has been our observation that most pictures with an *historical* flavor tend to do better in the big cities than elsewhere; perhaps the metropolitan taste is more sophisticated in general; certainly Welles is much stronger in cities over 500,000 than elsewhere. (See Audit October 1940).

The picture appeals about equally to males and females. Its appeal

*This segment of the population can contribute more to the success of a Broadway play than to the success of a motion picture. In fact it accounts for only 15 per cent of the motion picture dollar. The screen is a *broader-based* medium than the stage.

is considerably greater with theatergoers over twenty-five years than with the younger age groups.

To sum up: Orsen Welles in *CYRANO* emerges higher today than it did twelve months ago, which is a function of heightened curiosity in Welles. It is fair to assume that, unless *CITIZEN KANE* proves a serious disappointment to the general theatergoing public, the marquee value of Welles will rise during the next six months, and this should increase the box-office expectancy of *any* picture he plans to make. Nevertheless, there is nothing in our evidence to suggest that the acceptance value of *CYRANO DE BERGERAC* can do much to help Welles—certainly not enough to justify paying a high price for the property.

In general, the elements which have made *CYRANO* a great stage play in Paris, London and New York during the last forty years do not seem to appeal very strongly to the 42,000,000 Americans who go to motion picture theaters every week.

Princeton, May 17, 1941.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT LXXV

WARPATH, BITTER CREEK, BLOOD ON THE MOON

During March 1941 we received instructions to determine the audience acceptance value of three proposed Western pictures all cast with John Wayne. They were: *WARPATH* by Delmar Davis, *THE BITTER CREEK* by James Boyd, and *BLOOD ON THE MOON* by Luke Short.

The results of our surveys indicate that none of these pictures could reasonably be expected to exceed 70 per cent in the RKO Classification. How far below this figure they would emerge is not easy to predict.

When tested without cast, the stories emerged in this order:

1. *WARPATH*
2. *BLOOD ON THE MOON*
3. *THE BITTER CREEK*

There is little to choose between *WARPATH* and *BLOOD ON THE MOON* in over-all vote, but the former picture is somewhat stronger in the big cities, thanks in all probability to its *historical* flavor. *THE BITTER CREEK* emerges as low as any story ever tested by Audience Research Institute. All three properties find their highest level among boys under eighteen years old and among persons with incomes below \$20. per week.

When tested with John Wayne the three pictures emerged in that region of the waive-band where we once found *BILL OF DIVORCEMENT* and *THE EARL OF CHICAGO*. The subsequent box-office performance of these latter pictures is well known to you.

It must be remembered that the marquee value of John Wayne—his power to sell tickets—is strictly limited. Under the procedure employed in our Audit of Marquee Values, only five per cent of all theatergoers say that the name of John Wayne on the front of a theater would "make them want to buy a ticket." This compares with 35 per cent for Ginger Rogers and 55 per cent for Spencer Tracy.

Here are the box-office performances of Wayne's recent pictures as reflected by their rating in *BOX OFFICE DIGEST**:

	%
DARK COMMAND	82
THREE FACES WEST	73
SEVEN SINNERS	94 (81 per cent on RKO Classification)
LONG VOYAGE HOME	101 (84 per cent on RKO Classification)

These figures tend to confirm our finding that John Wayne's marquee value is small. An actor with such low marquee value in a story with

*Averages eight points higher than the RKO Classification.

such low audience appeal, can only have one result.

Examination of the comments recorded by our interviewers shows that a large majority of theatergoers regard these three pictures as they would regard any run-of-mill Western offered them as an A feature: *"That's just like all of the Westerners. They're alright for kids, but I don't care for them myself."*

James Boyd's novel THE BITTER CREEK was serialized in the Saturday Evening Post under the title THE ONLY MAVERICK. We have tested the comparative pulling power of these two titles, and we find that THE BITTER CREEK out-pulls THE ONLY MAVERICK in the proportion of five to three. Many theatergoers don't know what a Maverick is. One respondent guessed that it was a Russian (a Muscovite?).

Princeton, May 15, 1941.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT LXXVI

EAST FROM HALIFAX

Tests recently completed by Audience Research Institute indicate that a picture based on the adventures of American pilots ferrying bombers to Britain would have a high audience acceptance value. The synopsis used was as follows:

EAST FROM HALIFAX

Tense drama about a young American transport pilot who volunteers to head a squadron of unarmed U. S. bombers flying to Britain across the treacherous north Atlantic. What happens when one of the planes develops engine trouble during a storm, and the squadron is attacked by a Nazi patrol sent out to stop them.

During the last year we have tested more than two hundred stories, and EAST FROM HALIFAX ranks *fourth* out of the two hundred.

It is particularly strong with the lower income groups and with the younger age groups—always a healthy sign, as anybody who has studied our attendance charts will recognize.

The high vote for EAST FROM HALIFAX does *not* depend on the topical nature of the story—if this were the case we would refrain from recommending it. No. The vote reflects the ever-mounting interest in aviation subjects, the perennial interest of male theatergoers in all combat subjects—particularly when the characters are Americans, and general recognition that EAST FROM HALIFAX is a story of high adventure.

There is no question of EAST FROM HALIFAX being a “message” picture. Far from it. If the reader has seen our communications on the subject of “message” pictures he will understand that we are not likely to recommend the production of any picture which carries this taint. EAST FROM HALIFAX is an aviation-adventure picture and is recognized by the public as such; to introduce a propagandistic motif into it would be to reduce its audience acceptance value.

A majority of the comments recorded by our interviewers are along these simple lines: “I like airplane pictures and I want to be a pilot.”

"It's got adventure and I have a mania for airplanes." "Sounds like a lot of action." "It's an airplane picture and will keep you on edge." "Boy that'd be a thrill." "I'm crazy about planes and pilots." "This looks plenty good—*action* is what I like."

At this time, when big marquee names are becoming more and more difficult to obtain, the search for stories which can stand on their own feet assumes a new importance. *EAST FROM HALIFAX* is such a story. Whether it could be made on any reasonable budget is another matter, and one upon which we are not competent to pass judgment.

The next step is to test this story with cast, in order to arrive at an actual box-office estimate.

Princeton, May 22, 1941.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH AUDIENCE

REPORT LXXVII

LUCILLE BALL

When measured by the procedure employed in our standard audit of marquee values, Lucille Ball emerges very low. Only three per cent of all theatergoers say that her name on the marquee would make them want to buy a ticket. She ranks 113th out of the whole roster of 114 personalities.

The interviewing upon which these figures are based was conducted between April 11 and April 27. *A GIRL, A GUY AND A GOB* was released March 14.

It is true that Lucille Ball has not yet reached the limit of her power-to-sell-tickets. She still has a long way to go before she is even *known* to all the motion picture public. Up to this time only 58 per cent are aware that "Lucille Ball" is the name of an actress, and only 33 per cent can identify her from a photograph. Here are comparable identification figures on photographs of other personalities:

% Identifying Photograph

Clark Gable	97
Lucille Ball	33
George Sanders	32
Walter Brennan	23
Dennis Morgan	18

In a survey conducted in the week ending May 3, 1941, we asked a representative cross-section of theatergoers to name any picture in which Lucille Ball had appeared. Here are the results:

	%
A GIRL, A GUY AND A GOB	12
TOO MANY GIRLS	6
DANCE GIRL DANCE	3
ALL OTHERS	4
Unable to Name any Picture	75
	100

In an entirely separate survey we asked theatergoers first whether they had seen *A GIRL, A GUY AND A GOB*, then whether they could "name

the 'girl'—the one who played the lead—her name in the picture was Dot." Only 60 per cent of those who had seen the picture could name Lucille Ball.

It is apparent that Lucille Ball is only at the beginning of her career as a marquee name. However well known she may be in Hollywood and among exhibitors, she needs more pictures and more build-up before the theatergoing public becomes completely aware of her.

How far Lucille Ball can climb when she becomes better known is not easy to predict. Unfortunately the special procedure employed in our Dark Horse study does not reveal any marked symptoms of promise on her part.

Perhaps the most encouraging feature of audience reactions to Lucille Ball is the prevalence of comments to the effect that she is *common, cheap, a hussey, vulgar, coarse, the Jean Harlow type*, etc. She is also widely spoken of as *cute, a sweet dish, nice shape, sex appeal, just a blonde, home breaker*.

Such earthy comments are surely a more healthy sign, in terms of box-office, than the comments we get on certain other personalities to the effect that they are great actresses but high class and high hat.

Like 78 per cent of all motion picture actresses Lucille Ball is more popular with women than with men.

She is most popular with theatergoers under 18, which is unusual for an actress of her age. The most plausible reason for this anomaly is that she is best known to the very *frequent* theatergoers, who normally become aware of a new star long before the bulk of the theatergoing public gets around to noticing her. These frequent theatergoers are concentrated in the 12-17 age group.

Princeton, May 27, 1941.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT LXXVIII

DARK HORSES II

In March 1937 we selected these fourteen personalities as being the most promising investments for 1940:

Charles Boyer	Rochelle Hudson
Madeleine Carroll	Merle Oberon
Melvyn Douglas	Tyrone Power
Deanna Durbin	Luise Rainer
Alice Faye	Randolph Scott
Henry Fonda	Ann Sothorn
Olivia De Havilland	James Stewart

In August 1940 we selected the following as the most promising dark horses for 1943:

1. Jeffrey Lynn
2. Joan Fontaine
3. Linda Darnell
4. Gloria Jean
5. Lana Turner
6. George Murphy
7. Anna Neagle
8. Ingrid Bergman
9. Maureen O'Hara
10. Ronald Reagan

At that time we wrote that "subsequent polls would detect any signs of slipping and would also uncover any new promise."

We have just completed (April 24, 1941) another study of dark horses, and on the basis of the results obtained, we nominate the following as showing the greatest promise of becoming big marquee names before 1944:

1. Stirling Hayden
2. Ruth Hussey
3. Laraine Day
4. Ronald Reagan
5. Ingrid Bergman
6. Eddie Albert
7. Robert Preston
8. Geraldine Fitzgerald
9. Gloria Jean
10. John Payne
11. Bobs Watson
12. James Craig

The following forty-five personalities were also included in the study but failed to show:

Arnaz, Desi	Hall, Jon	Mature, Victor
Ball, Lucille	Holden, William	McPhail, Douglas
Bari, Lynn	Holt, Tim	Miller, Ann
Brooks, Phyllis	Howard, John	O'Brien, Edmond
Bryan, Jane	Joyce, Brenda	O'Keefe, Dennis
Carroll, Joan	Kelly, Nancy	Parker, Jean
Carroll, John	Knowles, Patric	Reed, Philip
Drew, Ellen	Lake, Veronica	Rice, Florence
Ebsen, Buddy	Landis, Carole	Taylor, Kent
Ellison, James	Lewis, Diana	Weaver, Marjorie
Field, Betty	Louise, Anita	Weidler, Virginia
Field, Virginia	Lydon, Jimmy	Whelan, Arleen
Gilmore, Virginia	Marshall, Brenda	Woods, Donald
Granville, Bonita	Martin, Mary	Wyatt, Jane
Grey, Nan	Massey, Ilona	Wyman, Jane

It must be emphasized that the results of this study do not represent the *present* marquee values of these fifty-seven personalities, but rather a prediction of their marquee values three years from today.

In order to arrive at our estimate of *future* marquee values, we measure the *intensity* of each personality's following. This procedure reveals that some of the personalities who rank high today are unlikely to maintain their position, while certain other personalities, whose identity is known to only a few theatergoers today, are likely to climb to the top.

For example, Stirling Hayden ranks only seventh today, but we predict that before 1944 he will rank higher than all the personalities on this roster.

Our study revealed that one Dark Horse, who was not included in the roster supplied to us by RKO, shows considerable promise of becoming a marquee name: CAROLYN LEE.

It would be idle to suppose that these predictions will turn out to be infallibly correct in every case. Just as Luise Rainer and Rochelle Hudson have failed to achieve the success which was predicted for them in April 1937, so it is inevitable that some of this year's leading Dark Horses will fall by the wayside. Subsequent polls will detect any signs of slipping, and will also uncover any new promise among Dark Horses who have not yet distinguished themselves.

Princeton, May 28, 1941.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT LXXIX

WHAT IS WRONG WITH MOVIE ADVERTISING?

Audience Research Institute does not believe that the ordinary theatergoer is qualified to answer the question "What is wrong with movie advertising?" The customary protests against crutch art and the traditional superlatives (stupendous, colossal, terrific, etc.) do not impress us. So long as there is factual proof that such art and such superlatives sell pictures, the protests of the amateur critic are irrelevant.

We believe, however, that the wishes of the theatergoing public can usefully be consulted when it comes to deciding what kind of information to include in the advertisements of exhibitors.

It was with this thought in mind that we interviewed a representative cross-section of theatergoers throughout the United States and showed them a list of "some things the movie ads might give." They were asked: "Is there anything on that list that *you'd* like to know about a movie before you go — but which your local ads don't tell you?"

The list, with the votes received for each item, was as follows (arranged in order of voting):

	%
1. Time the Main Feature Goes On	53
2. Length of the Complete Show	33
3. What Shorts are Playing	29
4. Time the Show Begins	24
4. Price of Admission	24
6. Tell More About the Story	17
7. Time the Second Feature Goes On	15
8. Contents of the Newsreel	13
9. What the Second Feature is About	10

It is an interesting commentary on the results of this survey that *not one* of the nine items listed above is included in the RKO theater ads which appear in today's New York newspapers.

Princeton, May 28, 1941.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT LXXX

MARQUEE VALUE OF TEAMS

Those who are worried about the increasing difficulty of obtaining more than one marquee name even for the most important pictures can take comfort from the results of a study recently completed by Audience Research Institute.

We find that even in the case of such well-recognized teams as Cary Grant and Irene Dunne, the marquee value of two big names appearing together in one picture is not nearly as great as the sum of their individual marquee values when they appear alone.

In a nationwide survey conducted between May 15 and May 20, 1941 we measured the marquee value of ten pairs of stars. Comparison of the results obtained in this study with the marquee value of the individual personalities as measured in the April Audit reveals that in every case the two personalities can sell more tickets operating separately in two films than operating together in one.

The main reason is that there is always some degree of *overlapping* or *duplication* between the followers of any two stars, and in the case of recognized teams this overlapping is considerable.

% Who Would Buy A Ticket

Spencer Tracy alone	52
Mickey Rooney alone	48
Tracy and Rooney together	53
Myrna Loy alone	29
William Powell alone	22
Loy and Powell together	45
Bing Crosby alone	30
Bob Hope alone	30
Crosby and Hope together	41
Cary Grant alone	33
Irene Dunne alone	22
Grant and Dunne together	35
James Cagney alone	26
Pat O'Brien alone	22
Cagney and O'Brien together	33
Ginger Rogers alone	40
Fred Astaire alone	13
Rogers and Astaire together	25

	%
Rosalind Russell alone	22
Melvyn Douglas alone	19
Russell and Douglas together	24
Vivien Leigh alone	27
Laurence Olivier alone	15
Leigh and Olivier together	22
Alice Faye alone	26
Don Ameche alone	18
Faye and Ameche together	20
Joan Blondell alone	9
Dick Powell alone	7
Blondell and Powell together	13

It appears that Spencer Tracy's followers include almost all Mickey Rooney's followers, so that adding Rooney to a picture which already has Tracy adds only one per cent to the number of theatergoers who will want to see that picture. In the light of this fact there would seem to be no direct justification for using Rooney *with* Tracy.

The addition of William Powell to a cast which already includes Myrna Loy adds 16 per cent to the number of persons who will want to see the picture—either because the duplication is less in this case, or because the addition of Powell carries with it implications of *THIN MAN* comedy which would not otherwise be present.

Likewise Bob Hope adds 10 per cent to a picture which already contains Bing Crosby, or vice versa. But even so you could sell more tickets by using these two actors separately.

Similarly Irene Dunne adds very little to Cary Grant, Pat O'Brien adds very little to James Cagney, Melvyn Douglas adds very little to Rosalind Russell and Dick Powell adds very little to Joan Blondell. It is perfectly understandable that there should be so much duplication between the followers of these personalities.

In some cases the addition of the lesser marquee name is found actually to *reduce* the marquee strength of the picture. Thus Ginger Rogers is considerably stronger than Rogers and Astaire; Alice Faye is stronger than Faye and Ameche; Vivien Leigh is stronger than Leigh and Olivier.

We will not comment on these facts except to say that they seem to constitute a powerful argument against the indiscriminate piling up of high-priced talent in one picture.

Princeton, May 28, 1941.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT LXXXI

INTRODUCTION TO A NEW INDEX

Nine months ago Mr. J. R. McDonough suggested that, in addition to measuring the publicity penetration of pictures, we should also measure the percentage of theatergoers who want to see them. He felt that some combination of these two factors—the percentage having heard of the picture and the percentage wanting to see it—would yield an accurate prediction of box-office performance.

After prolonged experiment we have found a formula which, when applied one week before release, yields an accurate indication of future box-office rating.

The remarkable feature of this formula is that it assigns to publicity penetration no less than *half* the value of the "want to see" vote. That means, in effect, that publicity penetration is half as important as the picture itself.

Part of the explanation for this somewhat surprising discovery lies in the fact that publicity penetration is to some extent a function of the picture itself—a fine picture with a famous cast gathers publicity more easily than a poor picture with a little-known cast.

Nevertheless we must admit that we have been astonished by the extent to which publicity penetration seems to affect box-office performance.

The accompanying table shows the result of applying our formula to sixteen pictures.

Notice that for more than 80 per cent of these pictures the formula yielded a prediction which was accurate within nine percentage points.

When the reader has studied this table, he will be forced to draw some rather startling conclusions. For example:

- (1) Of those who had heard of MR. AND MRS. SMITH no less than 76 per cent wanted to see the picture. This comes within two points of the comparable figure on KITTY FOYLE. But unfortunately the publicity penetration for MR. AND MRS. SMITH was less than *half* the publicity penetration of KITTY FOYLE. Assuming the accuracy of these figures, the implication is unmistakable: *if MR. AND MRS. SMITH had attained the same publicity penetration as KITTY FOYLE it would have come within three points of KITTY FOYLE on the RKO Classification.*
- (2) Six out of the seven RKO pictures included in this study were below average in publicity penetration. We estimate that if these six pictures had attained *average* publicity penetration (24 per cent), their aggregate U.S. gross would have been increased by approximately ten percent.

Henceforward we shall report the weekly Index of Publicity Penetration in terms of the accompanying table. From week to week we shall predict what the box-office performance of each picture would be *if it were released the following week.*

We believe that, if we can maintain the standard of accuracy revealed in the table, the value of this new service to RKO will be very great indeed.

Among other things it may enable you to make a better estimate of the final gross of every picture before the picture opens, and to make financial dispositions accordingly.

It will give your theater department advance information which should be of considerable value to them.

It will enable you to apportion the credit for every box-office success as between the producer and the publicity man.

Princeton, June 9, 1941.

	Publicity Penetration Week Before Release	+ or — Average	Percentage of Those Having Heard of Picture Who Want to See It	+ or — Average	A.R.I. Prediction on Basis of Formula*	Actual Performance in RKO Theaters	Error In A.R.I. Prediction
	%		%		%	%	%
PHILADELPHIA STORY	48	+24	84	+16	144	144	0
KITTY FOYLE	46	+22	78	+10	135	140	5
KNUTE ROCKNE	32	+8	82	+14	131	124	7
ZIEGFELD GIRL	47	+23	73	+5	129	120	9
MEET JOHN DOE	29	+5	65	-3	106	105	1
MR. AND MRS. SMITH	22	-2	76	+8	116	116	0
THE WESTERNER	28	+4	68	0	109	116	7
THIEF OF BAGDAD	28	+4	69	-1	111	109	2
LUCKY PARTNERS	17	-7	72	+4	107	93	14
PENNY SERENADE	28	+4	65	-3	105	116	11
COME LIVE WITH ME	18	-6	67	-1	101	101	0
YOU'LL FIND OUT	9	-15	67	-1	95	94	1
THAT NIGHT IN RIO	15	-9	63	-5	94	89	5
THEY KNEW WHAT THEY WANTED	13	-11	63	-5	93	82	11
THE DEVIL AND MISS JONES	4	-20	60	-8	83	92	9
NO NO NANETTE	11	-13	54	-14	79	80	1

*The prediction formula is as follows:

$$\frac{2(PP + 2G)}{3} = R$$

where PP is the publicity penetration one week before release, G is the percentage of persons having heard of the picture who want to see it, and R is the probable rating on the RKO Classification.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT LXXXII

MALES *versus* FEMALES

An article by Frederick Lewis in the June 7 LIBERTY informs us that 80 per cent of all theatergoers are females. In REPORTS XIX and LI we disposed of this superstition by reporting our finding that females account for only 51 per cent of all attendance.

However, some people could still argue that females exercise greater influence than males on the choice of picture—wives picking their husbands' pictures, etc.

A nation-wide study just completed by Audience Research Institute shows that this is not the whole story.

It is true that when mixed couples attend together—girl friend with boy friend, husband with wife, brother with sister, etc.—the female is more often the chooser of the film. But men attend the theater *alone* so much more often than women that the latter tendency counteracts the former.

The net result is that in fifty-one cases out of every hundred the picture is chosen by a female, while in the remaining forty-nine cases the picture is chosen by a male.

As a sidelight on this subject it is interesting to report another recent finding by this Institute. Sixty-eight per cent of all tickets are actually *paid for* by males.

Princeton, June 2, 1941.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT LXXXIII

THE BLIND STALLION II

A nation-wide survey recently completed by Audience Research Institute indicates that, assuming average publicity penetration, Dave Butler's technicolor picture with Randolph Scott, Claire Trevor and Dennis Morgan should reach 90 per cent on the RKO Classification. To translate that percentage rating into probable dollar gross it would be necessary to know the terms on which the picture will be sold.

It is remarkable that this rating of 90 per cent is no lower than the rating we obtained four months ago when we tested the property with two much bigger marquee names—Pat O'Brien and Loretta Young. At that time there was evidence to the effect that O'Brien and Young were considered incompatible and mis-cast. In the case of Randolph Scott, Claire Trevor and Dennis Morgan there is no such indication of mis-casting.

You also instructed us to test this picture with Scott, Ruth Warrick and James Craig. The substitution of Craig and Warrick for Trevor and Morgan is not likely to make any appreciable difference to the theater-going public, since the aggregate marquee value of both pairs is so very small. Randolph Scott is common to both proposed casts; even his pulling power is confined to eight per cent of the theatergoing public.

The picture emerges highest among persons whose family income is below \$20 per week and persons living in communities under 10,000. Clearly these are not the most lucrative segments of the motion picture market.

These are only insignificant variations in the audience reaction by age groups and by sex.

Reference to REPORTS XLIV and XLV may help the reader to estimate the reasons why the audience acceptance value of this race-track story is not higher than it is.

We find that the pulling power of the various titles proposed for this picture rate as follows:

1. CALIFORNIA
2. THE BLIND STALLION
3. BRED IN CALIFORNIA
4. BLOOD WILL TELL
5. PHOTO FINISH
6. CLASS WILL TELL
7. TRUE TO FORM

Princeton, June 3, 1941.

CALIFORNIA

Comedy and romance in a racetrack setting. A gentleman trainer and his pretty fun-loving wife own one of the greatest horses of all time. When the horse goes blind, their marriage almost goes on the rocks, too. What happens when the blind stallion is entered in the famous \$100,000 Handicap Race at Santa Anita. (In Technicolor.)

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT LXXXIV

MAYOR OF 44th STREET

A nation-wide survey recently completed by Audience Research Institute indicates that, assuming average publicity penetration, **MAYOR OF 44TH STREET** with George Raft should rate approximately 85 per cent on the RKO Classification.

The synopsis used in our tests was as follows:

Broadway swing comedy about a handsome tough-guy from the wrong side of the tracks, and how he becomes ruler of the dance-band world by staging the jitter-bug "demonstrations" which make or break big-name dance orchestras. What happens when he falls for the girl singer of a band he doesn't like.

Our findings indicate that there is a considerable body of ticket buyers who like jitterbug stuff but are not attracted by tough-guy George Raft.

The market for swing subjects seems to be somewhat sharply defined—a limited but enthusiastic segment of the population concentrated in the younger age groups. They seem to know exactly what they like, beginning with Kay Kyser; and there are enough of them to yield a profit on swing pictures—provided the budget is kept low enough. Any attempt to *broaden* the appeal of a swing subject by using a recognized motion picture personality is likely to run into the law of diminishing returns rather soon.

As in the case of **THE BAND PLAYED ON** it is probable that the use of a name band would increase the appeal of the picture. If we had to choose between George Raft and a leading name band for **MAYOR OF 44TH STREET**, we would choose the band with little hesitation.

It might be as well to remind the reader that George Raft is not now a major marquee name. He ranks only sixtieth in the latest Audit (April 1941), 14 per cent saying that his name on the marquee would make them want to buy a ticket.

MAYOR OF 44TH STREET is stronger with persons under thirty years old than with those over thirty, and it appeals more in towns under 100,000 than in the larger cities. In spite of Raft's exceptional strength among persons in the lower income groups the picture appeals about equally to rich and poor. This fact is another indication that **MAYOR OF 44TH STREET** is unacceptable to the theatergoers who appreciate George Raft.

Princeton, June 3, 1941.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT LXXXV

R. U. R.

Nineteen years ago the Theater Guild produced Karel Capek's R.U.R. It ran for one hundred and eighty-four performances. In accordance with your instructions we have just measured the acceptance value of this property for the motion picture public of 1941.

In the hope that the story would find an enthusiastic market amongst those persons who read the pseudo-scientific comic strips of the SUPERMEN type, we eliminated the propaganda present in Capek's play:

An action-packed drama about a group of scientists who dream of creating an ideal world by producing giant mechanical robots to do all the work. What happens when the robots come to life and kill the scientists—then discover they've sealed their own doom by murdering the only men who knew how to create them.

When tested without cast, R.U.R. emerges fairly high with males under eighteen years old, but is found to be more or less without appeal for the rest of the motion picture public. It is possible that interest in subjects of this type is not sufficiently *widespread* for motion picture purposes.

The following table shows the vote for R.U.R. by different segments of the theatergoing public. To help the reader assess the value of this story, we show the figures obtained on LIFE WITH FATHER—another story recently tested for RKO:

	"R.U.R."	"LIFE WITH FATHER"
	%	%
<u>ALL PERSONS INTERVIEWED</u>	14	33
<u>MALES</u>	22	26
<u>FEMALES</u>	9	37
<u>AGE GROUPS</u>		
12 to 17 Males	27	22
Females	12	27
18 to 30 Males	22	26
Females	11	38
Over 30 Males	13	28
Females	3	47
<u>INCOME GROUPS</u>		
Prosperous (Over \$50 per week)	10	39
Middle (\$30 to \$50 " ")	16	36
Lower Middle (\$20 to \$30 " ")	15	28
Poor (Under \$20 " ")	21	21

Having regard to the fact that any production of R.U.R. would have to be on an "A" picture cost basis—costuming the robots, trick effect shots, etc.—it is difficult to derive any measure of encouragement from the findings of our survey

Be it said that, knowing the confidence reposed in R.U.R. by persons well qualified to judge, we have tried everything we could think of in an attempt to find some form in which this property would appeal more widely to the motion picture public. Three different synopses were tried, with and without the horror element—same result in every case. In one poll we even tried using the title SUPERMEN. It made no difference.

If the reader can think of any change in the synopsis which might increase the vote, we shall be ready to test it. But the change will have to be drastic if it is going to lift R.U.R. into the class of property which merits production on an "A" cost basis.

Princeton, June 4, 1941.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT LXXXVI

THE AMERICAN WAY II

In a series of four nation-wide polls conducted between May 6 and May 20, 1941, Audience Research Institute again measured the acceptance value of the *AMERICAN WAY*, this time cast with Paul Muni and Anna Neagle in place of Fredric March and Florence Eldridge.

On the basis of the results obtained in this study we estimate that, given normal publicity penetration, the picture would reach 105 per cent on the RKO Classification.

What this means in terms of dollar gross would depend on the terms upon which the picture were sold. But it is difficult to imagine how any picture involving such a formidable budget could hope to break even at 105 per cent.

It may help the reader assess the probable dollar gross of *THE AMERICAN WAY* with Muni and Neagle if we show the rating obtained by four other pictures on the RKO Classification:

	<i>RKO</i> Classification	<i>Reputed</i> Gross in U. S.
	%	
MY FAVORITE WIFE	136	\$1,300,000
PRIMROSE PATH	107	850,000
<u>THE AMERICAN WAY</u>	105	?
LUCKY PARTNERS	93	800,000
THEY KNEW WHAT THEY WANTED	82	500,000

You will recall that we tested this same property more than a year ago, using Fredric March and Florence Eldridge (Report V). As was to be expected, the substitution of Muni and Neagle for March and Eldridge has brought an increase in rating—a net gain of approximately ten per cent.

Muni ranks twenty-third in the Sixth (April) Audit, but it must be remembered that he has registered a serious decline over the last twelve months.

With a personality whose graph is falling as fast as Muni's, it is important to consider how much further it will have fallen before *THE AMERICAN WAY* could reach the theaters. At his average rate of decline over

the past twelve months he will have fallen below the first fifty by December of this year. Such a projection is of course somewhat speculative, but in this case it provides an indication which cannot safely be ignored. (See also Report XXIII—"Public Opinion and Paul Muni.")

As for Miss Neagle: Whatever her value may be in England, she does not yet rank amongst the first one hundred marquee names in the United States.*

Inspection of the vote for THE AMERICAN WAY by age groups and income groups shows some interesting differences, with the picture emerging strongest amongst persons over thirty in the higher income ranges:

<u>AGE GROUPS</u>		%
12-17 years		21
18-30 years		23
Over 30 years		31
<u>INCOME GROUPS</u>		
Prosperous	(Over \$50 per week)	27
Upper Middle	(\$30 to \$50 " ")	27
Middle	(\$20 to \$30 " ")	21
Poor	(Under \$20 " ")	21

Unfortunately THE AMERICAN WAY is found to be bristling with "prestige," as is demonstrated by the large number of comments along these lines:

"It is cultural"

Life-insurance salesman in Brooklyn.

"It is educational"

Peddler in Pittsburgh.

"Sounds like an easy way to get some history"

Student in Lincoln.

"I like those historical pictures—like the history of the flag, constitution, etc. They are most educational"

Wife of a bank-cashier in Washington.

It occurred to us that there are three main elements in THE AMERICAN WAY: the cavalcade of American life during the last fifty years, the "message" angle, and the music. We therefore tested three different synopses, each stressing one of these three elements.

*English exhibitors ranked her somewhere between 26th and 46th in their "international" poll of money-making stars for 1940, 10th in their British poll. See Motion Picture Herald, Jan. 4, 1941.

The "cavalcade" synopsis won, and it was this synopsis which was used in the final test. Here it is:

A cavalcade of small town life in America during the last 50 years, from the excitement over the first automobile through the war hysteria of 1917, the jazz age, the boom, and the depression—told through the life story of a German immigrant and his family. How he rises from penniless cabinet-maker to factory owner and respected citizen.

The "message" synopsis was not popular. Here it is:

Dramatic conflict of a German immigrant, torn between loyalty to his old country and to his adopted land. How he learns to love the American Way of life so much that he sends his son to fight against Germany, over his wife's protest—and later gives his life to prevent his grandson from joining the Nazi Bund.

And here are some of the comments it elicited:

"I'm utterly opposed to propaganda pictures. Movies should be entertaining and amusing and this is propaganda under the guise of something else."

Stenographer in Philadelphia.

"There would be no relaxation—it seems like another dose of what we see every-day in the newspapers."

Student in Indianapolis.

"There is too much of this to be worried about already. I go to a movie to be amused."

Manager of a hatchery, Winfield, Iowa.

"That is like the picture we had not so long ago about how we got into the last war."

Inspectress in storage warehouse, New Brunswick.

Such reactions, and the low over-all vote for this synopsis, indicate that if RKO were to make THE AMERICAN WAY as a gesture to national morale, the gesture would turn out to be a somewhat expensive one.

The third synopsis emphasized the old popular songs and the musical aspect of the picture:

"With favorite old songs like "Keep the Home Fires Burning" and "Ramona," Kaufman and Hart weave a musical pageant of small town America during the last fifty years—told through the story of a romantic young immigrant couple who come to love the American way of life as it changes from the horse and buggy days to the streamlined present.

This synopsis did no better than the "message" synopsis. These old songs are heavy with nostalgia for those of us who can remember the days when they were being sung, but they do not seem to mean much to the young. If the reader has seen Chart VIII in our COMPOSITION OF THE MOTION PICTURE AUDIENCE, he will remember that attendance reaches its peak at age nineteen. These infant customers don't know much about KEEP THE HOME FIRES BURNING or RAMONA.

Princeton, June 5, 1941.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT LXXXVII

THREE COMIC STRIPS

In accordance with instructions received on May 16, 1941, we have tested the comparative audience acceptance value of pictures based on POLLY AND HER PALS, TOOTS AND CASPER, ROOM AND BOARD.

A representative cross-section of theatergoers all over the United States were shown synopses of the three pictures, and were asked this question: "Suppose these movies were all playing next week. Which one would you be most likely to see?" Voting was as follows:

	<u>ROOM AND BOARD</u>	<u>TOOTS AND CASPER</u>	<u>POLLY AND HER PALS</u>	<u>NONE</u>
	%	%	%	%
<u>ALL PERSONS INTERVIEWED</u>	40	27	17	16
<u>MALES</u>	54	21	11	14
<u>FEMALES</u>	27	33	23	17
<u>AGE GROUPS</u>				
12-17 years	48	28	20	4
18-30 years	41	26	18	15
Over 30 years	32	27	14	27
<u>SIZE OF COMMUNITY</u>				
Under 10,000	54	26	14	6
10,000 to 100,000	43	23	17	17
100,000 to 500,000	35	33	21	11
Over 500,000	34	25	16	25
<u>ECONOMIC STATUS</u>				
Prosperous (Over \$50 per week)	43	17	11	29
Upper Middle (\$30 to \$50 per week)	38	29	18	15
Middle (\$20 to \$30 per week)	41	26	20	13
Poor (Under \$20 per week)	43	36	15	6

One curious fact about these results is that TOOTS AND CASPER, which is easily the most popular of the three comic strips in terms of newspaper readers, should be defeated by ROOM AND BOARD when it comes to a test for audience appeal. ROOM AND BOARD is actually the least well-known of the three comic strips.

In a nation-wide survey conducted six months ago, we asked a representative cross-section of theatergoers: "Which of the newspaper comic strips do you think would make a good movie?"

Four thousand eight hundred persons were interviewed, and the voting was as follows:

1. Blondie	596		
2. L'il Abner	479		
3. Dick Tracy	340		
4. Superman	240		
5. Bringing Up Father	220		
6. Orphan Annie	164		
7. Terry and the Pirates	153		
8. Smiling Jack	141		
9. Boots and her Buddies	124		
10. Joe Palooka	117		
11. Tillie the Toiler	115	36. Etta Kett	30
11. Gasoline Alley	115	36. Dan Dunn	30
13. Jane Arden	101	38. Apple Mary	29
14. Flash Gordon	96	38. Major Hoople	29
15. Abbie and Slats	82	40. Mr. & Mrs.	26
16. Dixie Dugan	81	40. The Nebbs	26
17. Wash Tubs	71	40. Tim Tyler	26
18. Mutt and Jeff	70	40. Red Ryder	26
19. Winnie Winkle	67	40. Brick Bradford	26
19. Freckles	67	45. Skippy	25
21. Popeye	63	45. Prince Valiant	25
22. The Phantom	62	45. Buck Rogers	25
23. Moon Mullins	60	48. Ben Webster	24
24. Donald Duck	59	49. Flying Jimmy Dare	23
25. Katzenjammer Kids	55	49. Flying Jenny	23
26. Ella Cinders	52	51. Barney Google	22
27. Ally Oop	50	52. Cap Stubbs	21
27. Harold Teen	50	52. Smitty	21
29. Toots and Casper	46	54. Fritzi Ritz	20
29. The Gumps	46	54. Annie Rooney	20
31. Henry	36	56. Nancy	19
32. Mandrake	35	56. Ned Brant	19
33. Out Our Way	34	58. Mickey Mouse	17
34. Mickey Finn	32	59. Mary Worth's Family	15
35. Tarzan	31	60. Chief Wahoo	14

61. Don Winslow	12	71. Clarence	7
62. Secret Agent X-9	11	71. Lone Ranger	7
62. Dickie Dare	11	71. Bat Man	7
62. Joe Jinks	11	75. Tailspin Tommy	6
65. Benny Baxter	10	75. Ripple Family	6
65. Pa Perkins (Polly And Her Pals)	10	75. Dick Draper	6
65. Jungle Jim	10	78. Little Miss Muffet	5
68. The Bungles	9	78. Big Sister	5
69. Timid Soul	8	78. Little King	5
69. Tiny Tim	8	78. J. Autry	5
71. Invisible Scarlett O'Neill	7	78. Scorchy Smith	5
		78. Captain and the Kids	5
		84. Hap Hopper	5

Princeton, June 12, 1941.

"ROOM AND BOARD"

Judge Puffle, lazy teller of tall-tales, comes to life in the movies. What happens when he brags that he has invented a new type of explosive—and is called to Washington to demonstrate it.

"POLLY AND HER PALS"

Pretty Polly Perkins of comic strip fame, is finally brought to the screen. The human story of a popular stenographer, who's always trying to "glamorize" Pa and Ma in order to impress her numerous boy friends.

"TOOTS AND CASPER"

Light-hearted comedy about the famous comic strip couple who look forward to the day when their bachelor uncle will leave them his millions. How they try to keep him from marrying a scheming gold-digger.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT LXXXVIII

LIFE WITH FATHER

The results of three polls conducted by Audience Research Institute indicate that the studio which is able to secure *LIFE WITH FATHER* will be extremely fortunate.

We have tested the property without cast, then with Howard Lindsay and Dorothy Stickney, then with Adolphe Menjou and Fay Bainter.

When tested without cast, *LIFE WITH FATHER* emerged high. The comments recorded verbatim by our interviewers show that the main reasons for its appeal are these:

1. It is a piece of light-hearted entertainment. Recent studies have shown that pictures which are easily *recognizable* as light-hearted entertainment are now at a premium.
2. It appeals to those very numerous theatergoers who have learned to like *family* pictures.
3. Its publicity penetration is 49 per cent. Here is why:
 - A. The Clarence Day book has sold 215,000 copies and has probably been read by more than 1,500,000 persons.
 - B. The play has been at the Empire Theater on Broadway for 665 performances, and—what is more significant—it has been smashing attendance records all over the country on its road tour.

In Chicago it has just completed sixty-six weeks at the Blackstone Theater, where it played to 600,000 people who paid \$900,000 to see it.

It also broke records in Boston and Philadelphia. In the former city it played for twenty-three weeks at the Repertory Theater, while in the latter it recently completed a thirteen week run at the Walnut St. Theater.

Up to June 14, 1941, it is said to have grossed \$1,420,000 in New York, and has turned in a net profit of \$938,000 in all.

- 4) The property is so well known that it comes in the class of widely recognized *musts*. Our experience has shown that,

when a story or a play achieves the status of a social *must*, the number of persons who will find it easiest to satisfy this *must* by seeing it on the screen becomes very large indeed. Herein, we believe, lies the secret of the success of most best-sellers which have done well as motion pictures.

(The mistake many producers have made was to assume that their properties belonged to this élite guard when actually they belonged in the larger company of *near* best-sellers. It seems to make all the difference in the world. Johnny Belinda, for example, has a publicity penetration of only 22 per cent.)

When tested with Adolphe Menjou and Fay Bainter, the picture emerged at a level which would justify a box-office expectancy of 115 per cent on the RKO Classification. This result is remarkable, having regard to the strictly limited marquee value of Menjou and Bainter. Menjou has not been measured in an Audit since April, 1940, when he ranked one hundred and third out of one hundred and twenty-eight personalities.

It would be interesting to try the effect of using a more *American* actor—Frank Morgan, for example.

When tested with Lindsay and Stickney, the picture did not do well, in fact 80 per cent would be a generous estimate of its box office rating with this cast. In this test only two per cent of those who voted for the picture gave a reason in terms of cast, as compared with an average of 32 per cent for the general run of A pictures.

There is little to say about the property's acceptance value for different segments of the population, except that it appeals more to females than to males, and more to the two upper income groups than the two lower. This was the pattern we found when pre-testing MY FAVORITE WIFE.

Princeton, June 23, 1941.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT LXXXIX

SISTER CARRIE II

In accordance with your instructions of June 10, we have tested *SISTER CARRIE* with Ginger Rogers in place of Irene Dunne.

As you may suppose, we undertook this latest assignment with no little misgiving. Ginger Rogers in *SISTER CARRIE* is—at first sight—so much like Ginger Rogers in *KITTY FOYLE* that our failure to predict the latter picture was bound to make us nervous about going to work on the former.

Our new findings indicate that, assuming average publicity penetration (24 per cent one week before release), and assuming normal playing time—neither Christmas nor New Years—*SISTER CARRIE* would reach 100 per cent on the RKO Classification.

We must emphasize these two premises—average publicity penetration and normal playing time—because we have found out that it was the super-normal penetration and the special playing-time which, more than anything else, upset our calculations on *KITTY FOYLE*.

The actual dollar gross of a picture which rates 100 per cent on the RKO Classification depends of course on many variable factors, not the least of which are the terms of sale to the exhibitor.

It would seem that, while 100 per cent on the RKO Classification would no doubt yield a profit, such a result is not quite good enough for a picture which stars the second most popular actress on the screen.

In this connection, what is the consensus among your executives as to the effect of the new selling set-up on the dollar gross of pictures which come in the general classification of *SISTER CARRIE*?

Be that as it may, the purpose of this report is to inform you that the substitution of Ginger Rogers for Irene Dunne increases the box-office expectancy of *SISTER CARRIE* by ten per cent.

The gain comes chiefly from females under thirty—a segment of the population which happens to be more important than any other in terms of the motion picture dollar.

As was to be expected, the substitution of Rogers for Dunne reduces the picture's acceptance with females over thirty. But that does not matter.

It would perhaps be wise to point out three obvious differences which exist between the Dreiser property and KITTY FOYLE:

- (1) SISTER CARRIE is not a current best-seller. It therefor lacks that invaluable attribute of being a widely recognized social *must*. (See our report on LIFE WITH FATHER.)
- (2) SISTER CARRIE, as Dreiser wrote it, does not carry the same whif of 1941. For that reason it is not quite the natural for self-identification that KITTY FOYLE was.
- (3) SISTER CARRIE is not so light-hearted and *amusing* as KITTY FOYLE.

Now it may be that you have gotten a script on SISTER CARRIE which is every bit as nineteen-forty-one as KITTY FOYLE, and maybe your SISTER CARRIE script is just as light in its touch as the Donald Ogden Stewart-Dalton Trumbo script. But audience reactions to our SISTER CARRIE synopsis (which has been endorsed by RKO as a fair representation of your script) reflect a rather widespread lack of enthusiasm for Dreiser's story.

Respondents complain that SISTER CARRIE is too heavy, too serious, too sad, too morbid.

Princeton, June 24, 1941.

SISTER CARRIE

Based on Theodore Dreiser's dramatic real life story of a working girl in poor surroundings who step by step fights her way to fame as a stage star—and greatness *as a woman*. Though her marriage to a weak man brings heartbreak to them both, she rises above suffering to find new peace.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT XC

MR. ZERO

Urbain Ledoux died in New York on April 12, 1940. He had spent the best years of his life serving the city's ragtag and bobtail. Some deep religious instinct had sent him among the poor and the disinherited along the streets of forgotten men.

In accordance with your instructions we have measured the audience acceptance value of a motion picture based on the life of Ledoux, under the title MR. ZERO, with Paul Muni. We have also tested the story without cast.

Here is an interesting case: while Paul Muni's marquee value is substantially higher with theatergoers in the *upper* income levels, the acceptance of MR. ZERO—the story without cast—is substantially greater with the *low* income levels. The exact opposite.

We question whether the result of placing a star whose greatest popularity is among the *prosperous* in a story whose greatest appeal is to the *poor* can be entirely happy.

And yet we find that, assuming average publicity penetration, this picture would start out with a box-office expectancy of 100 per cent on the RKO Classification. Nothing sensational, but probably enough.

We received many unfavorable comments on the melancholy aspect of the story; which is ominous. But we also found a fairly widespread interest in it on the basis of its *inspirational* quality. Obviously there is a difference between this inspirational element in the story of MR. ZERO and the heavy social preachments of such message pictures as MEET MR. DOE.

What we have tested is the general idea of a picture about Ledoux. There is, as yet, no treatment, no script. It might be that your treatment would tap the same robust-sentimental market as the BOYS TOWN series. But it is perhaps a sign of these entertainment-hungry times that the latest BOYS TOWN picture is not doing as well as it should.

% On RKO Classification

1938	BOYS TOWN	159
1941	MEN OF BOYS TOWN	116

One hundred and sixteen per cent is a lame performance for a picture which stars the biggest and the fourth biggest ticket-sellers in the business.

The appeal of Mr. ZERO is markedly greater in the large cities over 500,000 than in smaller communities. It is therefor to be expected that it would do much better in such cities as New York, Chicago and Philadelphia than anywhere else.

Before any decision is taken to make this picture, very careful consideration should be given to Paul Muni's chart in the Sixth Audit. His marquee value has broken all records by declining 34 points during one year; and he is still sliding. The question arises, how many tickets will Mr. Muni be selling six months from today?

Princeton, June 25, 1941

"MR. ZERO"

The amazing but true life story of the man who gave up a successful business career in order to help the forgotten man. How, with the help of his actress wife, he finds unusual ways to get jobs for disabled war veterans, establishes shelters and soup kitchens—and turns a Bowery bum into a great painter.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT XCI

A SAD CASE

THE DEVIL AND MISS JONES is not an unqualified success at the box-office. Why?

(1) The week before the picture was generally released, only four per cent of all the theatergoers in the United States had heard of it. This is twenty points below average. If, instead of being four per cent, this figure had been *twenty-four* per cent (which is the average for A pictures), the picture would have grossed 16 per cent more dollars than it has grossed.

If the penetration had been 48 per cent (which was the penetration of KITTY FOYLE at the equivalent point of time), THE DEVIL AND MISS JONES would have grossed 35 per cent more dollars than it has grossed.

(2) Of those who *had* heard of THE DEVIL AND MISS JONES, 65 per cent wanted to see it. This is only three points below average for A pictures. Evidently nothing much the matter with the picture itself.

(3) We find that 63 per cent of those persons who have seen THE DEVIL AND MISS JONES *liked it more than they expected to*; the average for "liked it more than expected" is only 49 percent. Here is more evidence that the picture is better than its publicity.

Princeton, June 27, 1941.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT XCII

HOW MANY PICTURES SHOULD A STAR MAKE EVERY YEAR?

Recent increases in the taxes levied upon high incomes have made it more difficult than ever to secure the services of the big ticket-selling stars.

There is a growing tendency for the major stars to limit themselves to one or two pictures per year.

A study just completed by Audience Research Institute proves that any star who limits himself in this way is likely to do serious injury to his marquee value.

Having measured the changing marquee value of more than a hundred personalities at regular intervals during the last twelve months, we are now in a position to report the relationship between the number of pictures appeared in and the resultant gain or loss in marquee value.

- (1) The five stars who have not made a picture during the last year show an average *loss* in marquee value of 43 per cent. This means that they can sell 43 per cent fewer tickets than they could sell one year ago.
- (2) The eighteen stars who have made only *one* picture during the last year show an average *loss* in marquee value of 17 per cent.
- (3) The nineteen stars who have made only *two* pictures during the last year show an average *loss* in marquee value of 11 per cent.
- (4) The twenty-six stars who have made *three* pictures during the last year show an average *gain* in marquee value of 9 per cent.
- (5) The eleven stars who have made *four* pictures during the last year show an average *gain* in marquee value of 7 per cent.
- (6) The seven stars who have made *five* pictures during the last year show an average *gain* in marquee value of 8 per cent.

<i>Number of Pictures Appeared In</i>	<i>Number of Players In The Category</i>	<i>Average Gain or Loss in Marquee Value</i>
		%
0	5	-43
1	18	-17
2	19	-11
3	26	+9
4	11	+7
5	7	+8

These figures run substantially parallel for the 27 highest ranking stars, the 27 lowest ranking and the 27 medium ranking.

It is our hope that you will be able to use the results of this study to persuade Mr. Myron Selznick and the other agents to keep their clients busy in your studio—whatever it costs them in income tax.

Princeton, June 27, 1941.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT XCIII

SUE BARTON II

On August 19, 1940, we reported our finding that Helen Boylston's SUE BARTON — a series of novels about "a high-spirited and courageous young nurse with a temper that matches her red hair" — deserved consideration as the basis of one or more program pictures.

We have now measured the acceptance value of one story in the series, cast with Lucille Ball and James Craig. We find that it would start out with a box-office expectancy of 80 per cent on the RKO Classification — a remarkably high figure having regard to the infinitesimal marquee value of the two personalities concerned.

(In the Sixth Audit, Ball and Craig emerged 110th and 111th out of 111 names. Their power-to-sell-tickets is still confined to two per cent of the theater-going public, and it is questionable whether either of them, on a spontaneous vote without a roster, would emerge among the first 150.)

Everyone knows that *grown-up's* best-sellers have a way of making successful motion pictures — KITTY FOYLE, GRAPES OF WRATH, REBECCA, etc. But how about the *children's* best-sellers? Well, there is SNOW WHITE, ROBIN HOOD, WIZARD OF OZ and LITTLE WOMEN.

It is one thing to purchase an old Dreiser best-seller, a powerful drama for adult theatergoers. It is a lot less obvious to go out and purchase a book which nobody in Hollywood has ever heard of, but which (according to a survey just completed by this Institute) is now familiar to 46 per cent of all females under twenty.

The appeal of SUE BARTON is primarily to females, with girls in their teens showing up as the most enthusiastic of all.

Until Audience Research Institute revealed the fact that 34 per cent of all tickets are purchased by persons under twenty years old,* there had been a tendency to dismiss the adolescent market as chicken feed. Now we find that it is this segment of the population which has been chiefly responsible for the profitable careers of Mickey Rooney, Deanna Durbin and Judy Garland.

These adolescent customers seem to enjoy an innocuous type of story which older theatergoers might scorn. It is this quality of *innocuousness* which SUE BARTON shares with the HARDY series and the KILDARE series. The injection of more red-blooded passion into either of these stories would probably ruin them for their market.

* Excluding children under twelve.

Among young females we find a strong interest in nurses and nursing. The subject evidently has a special significance for them — nursing seems to represent one of the most adventurous careers open to them.

Just as Christopher Morley's stenographer presented a natural in self-identification for the older white-collar brigade, so Miss Boylston's heroine presents a natural in self-identification for the younger girls, whose ambitions and dreams still run to something more adventurous and idealistic than punching a typewriter.

It could not conceivably occur to any normal motion-picture executive that the public would like to have him produce anything so innocuous and tame as SUE BARTON.

But don't forget that the normal motion-picture executive is a male between the ages of thirty and seventy, and not a female under twenty. Our figures show that males over thirty simply are not interested in SUE BARTON, but it happens that they account for only 16 per cent of all tickets purchased. Their lack of interest is not fatal.

One of the beautiful features of audience research is that it can churn up unlikely ideas of this kind. Our discovery of SUE BARTON was made when we asked a cross-section of librarians in small towns to list the books which are most popular with kids. That was back in January, 1940, and SUE BARTON, RURAL NURSE emerged second. Today, eighteen months later, another in the SUE BARTON series is at the top of the list of children's favorites in the public libraries.

Every month WILSON LIBRARY BULLETIN publishes a list of the five most read children's books in the public libraries of twenty-six cities. One or another of the SUE BARTON books has been included in this list for thirty-eight out of the last forty-one months; on thirty-one of the lists SUE BARTON was among the first three.

On nine of the lists *two* SUE BARTON books were included at the same time. On one list *three* SUE BARTON books were included at the same time.

To say the least of it, this adds up to an impressive record.

Princeton, June 30, 1941.

SUE BARTON, STUDENT NURSE

The true-to-life experiences of a high-spirited young red-head who finds romance and excitement when she goes into training as a hospital nurse. Her adventures in the free clinic, in the accident ward, and on lonely night duty — and how her innocent romance with a handsome young interne almost results in her disgrace.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT XCIV

LOU GEHRIG

Six months ago this Institute began to suspect that, contrary to an accepted Hollywood tradition, the public would welcome a picture in which the leading man was a baseball player.

The first evidence pointing to this conclusion came to light in this way: A representative cross-section of theatergoers were asked whether they would like to see pictures based on the lives of men in seven different professions. The professions, in order of voting, were as follows:

1. Big League Baseball Player
2. Locomotive Engineer
3. Coal Miner
4. Fireman
5. Veterinary
6. Sand Hog
7. Hotel Chef

The next step was to find out *which* ball player would be most interesting to the theatergoing public. A study revealed that, *at that time*, Babe Ruth was the most acceptable, closely followed by Lou Gehrig. Here is the order of voting for the first ten: *

1. Babe Ruth
2. Lou Gehrig
3. Connie Mack
4. Ty Cobb
5. Walter Johnson
6. Christy Mathewson
7. Grover Alexander
8. Rogers Hornsby
9. John McGraw
10. Eddie Collins

* February, 1941.

The next step was to compose the synopsis of a hypothetical picture about Ruth, and to measure its audience acceptance value. This was done—with somewhat disappointing results. In spite of being cast with Pat O'Brien, the picture looked no better than 85 per cent on the RKO Classification.*

Well, that was February, when interest in baseball is at its lowest ebb. Five months later, at the height of the baseball season, we tested the Babe Ruth picture once again. The box-office value had increased ten per cent. Even at that there wasn't much temptation to rush into production.

In the meantime, however, Gehrig had died, and the newspapers had virtually canonized him. So we put LOU GEHRIG in the hopper, holding the factor of cast constant—with O'Brien.

The result surprised us, as much as anything ever surprises us in the field of motion picture research. LOU GEHRIG with Pat O'Brien emerged so high that, assuming average publicity penetration, a box-office expectancy of 125 to 130 per cent on the RKO Classification would be in order.

The actual cash gross would, of course, depend on the terms upon which the picture were sold to the exhibitor. If the terms were similar to those obtained for MY FAVORITE WIFE, the U. S. gross on LOU GEHRIG should be in the neighborhood of \$1,200,000. A high publicity penetration might increase this figure, and conversely a low penetration would depress it.

We must emphasize that this prediction is based on the present state of the market—the reaction of the public—*today*. Whether interest in Gehrig will abate as the months pass is a problem which only subsequent polls can decide. In any event it seems certain (on the basis of our previous results with Babe Ruth, quoted above) that the Gehrig picture would do better in the summer than in the winter.

The reason why LOU GEHRIG is so much stronger than our earlier brain-child BABE RUTH is not far to seek. Examination of the comments dictated by hundreds of ticket-buyers to our interviewers in the field shows that, whereas the vote for RUTH was little more than a vote for baseball and a spectacular ball player, the vote for GEHRIG is all this *and* a vote for an American hero.** Here are some typical comments:

* KNUTE ROCKNE hit 124 per cent.

** Don't think that this implies the presence of that dread element *prestige*. It doesn't.

"I've always *admired* him."

"I'm interested in baseball and I think he is a *swell* guy."

"Yes—He was a baseball *hero*."

"He was a *great* guy and it would be a great picture."

"Because he was a brilliant athlete and a *fine* fellow."

"Everybody likes and *admires* Lou Gehrig."

"Sorta example of *clean citizenship*—fine example of a man."

"Typical American fellow who reached the pinnacle of success."

"I read his life and it was pretty good and I like baseball."

"I think he was a splendid figure of manhood—a fine figure exemplifying *courage*."

"I don't like baseball but Lou Gehrig was a *fine* man and I'd like to see it."

"Thousands would pay just as a *tribute to his memory*—if they don't wait too long."

"Every honest-to-goodness American ought to see this because Lou Gehrig was such a *fine* man as well as one of the greatest ball players."

"He was a great man—stood for *wholesomeness* and *clean sport*."

"Yes—I know how courageous he was when he was sick."

"There's a man who was held up as an ideal—this picture will help the younger generation a *great* deal."

"I remember Pat O'Brien when he was Knute Rockne and Lou Gehrig, the blend—you know it."

"Because I've always *idolized* him."

"It is timely and he deserves the tribute. Pat O'Brien was a good Knute Rockne—that is one picture I liked."

"I saw him play his last game."

It may interest the reader (and guide the aim of the men who have to advertise this picture) if we give the vote for GEHRIG by segments of the theatergoing public:

	%
ALL MALES	39
ALL FEMALES	18

AGE GROUPS

MALES Aged 12-17	43
MALES Aged 18-30	38
MALES Aged 31-up	38
FEMALES Aged 12-17	20
FEMALES Aged 18-30	17
FEMALES Aged 31-up	19

INCOME GROUPS

Prosperous (Over \$50 per week)	26
Upper Middle (\$30 to \$50 per week)	28
Middle (\$20 to \$30 per week)	29
Poor (Under \$20 per week)	36

SIZE OF COMMUNITY

Cities over 500,000	31
100,000 to 500,000	31
10,000 to 100,000	28
Under 10,000	26

It is interesting to recall that the total audience for Mr. Goldwyn's last picture THE WESTERNER was 61 per cent *male*. Our REPORT LI established the curious fact that the average box-office performance of pictures with predominant *male* appeal is—if anything—slightly higher than the average box-office performance of pictures with predominantly *female* appeal.

Our selection of Pat O'Brien to play Gehrig was dictated solely by the exigencies of research procedure—remember we were comparing GEHRIG with RUTH and wanted to hold the cast constant. If Gary Cooper plays the part it is reasonable to expect an even higher box-office gross; Cooper ranks many places higher than O'Brien in power-to-sell tickets. See Sixth Audit of Marquee Values.

Our synopsis was composed without knowledge that Mr. Goldwyn or anybody else was considering this subject, and our indicated treatment is therefore likely to be a long way out of line with the producer's conception. It should be remembered, however, that our synopsis has been endorsed by a representative sample of ticket-buyers. Any radical departure from it might damage the picture's acceptance value.

Princeton, July 30, 1941.

LOU GEHRIG

True life story of baseball's "Iron Man". How the boy from the crowded New York slums won his chance with the Yankees and became a baseball hero—then showed he could take it when he was stricken with paralysis at the peak of a brilliant career, and took a job to help the boys who had idolized him.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT XCV

THE CHICAGO METHOD

The results of a study just completed by this Institute indicate that while the audience acceptance value of this *story* is moderate, the actual box-office performance of *THE CHICAGO METHOD with the cast proposed* would be lower than 70 per cent on the RKO Classification. Just how far below is a question we cannot answer with any degree of confidence.

We have been noticing a curious reluctance on the part of the public to accept pictures which are without any marquee name. So accustomed have theatergoers become to the presence of a 'name' in every reputable picture, that they interpret the absence of any 'name' as proof positive that the picture is going to be a dud.

The so-called "star system" is evidently a vicious circle; it isn't going to be easy to break it.

You plan a picture with one or more recognized marquee names. You know (from our Audit and from your own experience) that these names will deliver a certain minimum of ticket-buyers at the box-office. But just try making that picture *without any marquee name*. You will find that the omission of the marquee names damages the picture's box-office performance out of all proportion.

In the present case we found a moderate interest in the story. True there were many comments to the effect that "there is too much about this Nazi stuff now", but such reactions were counterbalanced by a fairly widespread interest in seeing the war and the Nazis treated humorously—for a change.

Furthermore, there seems to be a faithful, if somewhat small, market for all gangster pictures: "I'm a *gun* fan", said a twenty-four year old clerk in a Bronx liquor store.

The picture would no doubt be a good piece of propaganda for the democracies—indeed, the usual number of respondents complain of the propaganda element in it—but we find that its English setting is a definite handicap. There seems to be an obstinate preference on the part of American theatergoers for pictures in which not only the main characters, but also the background is American.

It is also open to question whether it is in the best interests of the United States at this time to picture the Nazis as being of such inferior caliber that they fall an easy prey to an American hooper. It seems to be the prevailing view in government circles that too many countries have made the mistake of deriding and in other ways underestimating the Nazis. Any picture which exposes them to ridicule, or gives the impression that they are easy to cope with, might therefore be open to attack.

THE CHICAGO METHOD appeals more to males than to females. It is strongest with boys under eighteen.

Princeton, July 31, 1941.

THE CHICAGO METHOD

GEORGE MURPHY, RUTH WARRICK, AND LOUIS HAYWARD.

Light-hearted comedy with plenty of action—about an American hooper in England who persuades a British General to let him try Chicago gangster methods on the Germans. How he and his "gang", armed with sawed-off shotguns and blackjacks, stage a surprise raid in Germany, and capture a group of Nazi big-shots.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT XCVI

RESULTS OF 29 STORY TESTS

In the course of its search for stories for RKO Radio Pictures, Inc., this Institute has measured the acceptance value of more than two hundred different ideas.

Hitherto it has been our policy to report the results of these tests only when they were strongly positive, and as a consequence you have received reports on not more than a small handful of outstanding properties.

It has recently been suggested, however, that in addition to issuing detailed reports on those rare winners which we are fortunate enough to unearth, we should also summarize the results we obtain on the less promising stories.

As a first installment we report below the actual percentages obtained on twenty-nine of the stories we have tested during the last year.

The actual figures must not be interpreted too literally. For example, 71 per cent of all theatergoers say they would be "reasonably sure" to see *THE WIDOW WORE A BLACK EYE*, but it does not for one moment follow that such a high percentage will actually do so. Far from it. To begin with, remember that only 60 per cent ever get to hear of the average A picture—so the 71 per cent must immediately be reduced to 43 per cent. To go on with, no cast is used in these trial heats and the actual number of persons who will see the picture is very greatly influenced by the cast.

For all practical purposes, therefore, the figures in the following pages possess no significance except in so far as they reflect the *relative* value of the different stories without reference to cast. These stories fall into three broad classes:

- (1) Those receiving a vote of more than 60 per cent may be considered outstanding. It is probably safe to assume that any of these would do great things at the box-office no matter how insignificant the marquee value of the cast assigned to them.
- (2) Those receiving a vote between 40 per cent and 60 per cent may be considered *average*. It is probably safe to assume that any of these would do adequate box-office business if they were cast with big marquee names.

- (3) Those receiving a vote below 40 per cent may be considered sub-normal. It is doubtful whether any star is big enough to save such stories from disaster.

If the reader is interested in any of these twenty-nine story ideas, we are ready to provide a more detailed report upon it—breaking down the vote by different segments of the population, and examining the whys and wherefores of audience reaction.

	Source	Percentage of Theatergoers Who Say They Would Be "Reasonably Sure" To See Picture
WILL ROGERS True life story of the lovable cowboy-philosopher, and how he wise-cracked his way from vaudeville rope-twirler to the nation's favorite humorist—who could tell-off Presidents but who was too bashful to propose to his girl.	A.R.I.	75
THE WIDOW WORE A BLACK EYE Hilarious comedy about a rich young bachelor who lends his apartment to a pretty girl while he goes on a cruise. What happens when he returns—finds he's officially dead and his pretty "widow" engaged to his worst enemy. (Original by Ross & Leslie)	RKO	71
ARMY SURGEON A picture of grim action and bitter-sweet romance—about an American army surgeon in command of a front-line hospital during the battle of Chateau-Thierry, and a pretty nurse who risks disgrace to go to his aid in an emergency. (Original by A.R.I.)	A.R.I.	66
EAST FROM HALIFAX Tense drama about a young American pilot whose job is to fly U. S. bombers to Britain across the wintry northern Atlantic—in spite of Nazi patrols sent out to stop him. (Various magazine articles)	A.R.I.	66
TELEVISION TOWN Light-hearted comedy about a small town where everybody is given television-telephones, as an experiment. The uproar when people begin using them to spy on enemies, and play practical jokes on friends. (Original by A.R.I.)	A.R.I.	65
CHINA SKY Pearl Buck's dramatic love story of an American doctor, his cowardly wife and a courageous nurse—against the background of the war in China. What happens when the wife buys safety for herself by helping a Japanese spy. (Novel by Pearl Buck)	A.R.I.	63

		Percentage of Theatergoers Who Say They Would Be "Reasonably Sure" To See Picture
Source		
CONNECTICUT YANKEE AT KING ARTHUR'S COURT	A.R.I.	62
Comedy about a modern, wisecracking American who wakes up one morning in King Arthur's England of a thousand years ago. How he modernizes the palace, wins a princess and outwits the court magician. (Made in 1921 and 1931)		
YES, YES YVETTE	A.R.I.	61
Hilarious musical comedy about a young stockbroker who bets \$30,000 he can tell the truth, and nothing but, for 24 hours. How he wins the bet—but nearly loses his sweetheart and ruins his business doing it. (Broadway Musical 1927)		
THE SILVER SPOON	A.R.I.	58
The world's wealthiest young man suddenly loses his fortune. Rather than accept favors, he gets a job as a truck driver's helper, and with the aid of a spunky redhead, learns to stand on his own feet—and like it. (C. B. Kelland In SATURDAY EVENING POST 1941)		
A THOUSAND DOLLARS	A.R.I.	51
Comedy with meaning. A rich old man—as an experiment—gives \$1,000 to every adult in his small home town. How the sudden prosperity wrecks the town—and nearly breaks up a young doctor's marriage. (Original by A.R.I.)		
PRIVATE LIFE OF HELEN OF TROY	A.R.I.	51
A streamlined version of the ancient Greek legend. Beautiful Helen wants LOVE but her husband treats her as a goddess. Helen's hilarious attempts to climb off her pedestal cause a war and four murders, but all's forgiven—she's so beautiful. (John Erskine Novel Made in 1927)		
MAUDIE	A.R.I.	51
In a light-hearted picture about the younger generation, Maudie of the magazine stories conquers the Navy, re-arranges her sister's love affair, shatters the calm of her adoring beau Davy, and scatters her irresistible wisecracks as she goes. (L. H. J. serial by the Lorrimers)		
THE DOCTOR FINDS HER MAN	A.R.I.	50
Sparkling comedy about a girl doctor who picks up a charming bum who has lost his memory. What happens when she uses her medical skill to find out who he is, and is then faced with the choice of telling him or losing him. (Original by A.R.I.)		

	Source	Percentage of Theatergoers Who Say They Would Be "Reasonably Sure" To See Picture
BRIDES GO ON FOREVER Hilarious comedy about an heiress who hires a public opinion poll to see which of two men she should marry. Angry at the poll director's scornful comments about her, she gets a job as interviewer under an assumed name—and falls in love with him. (Original by Seff and Leaf)	A.R.I.	50
SKI FOR TWO A career girl who hates snow, tries learning to ski to please a rich suitor. She recognizes the glamorous "Austrian" ski expert as a former fiance who can't ski any better than she can, and enters him in a dangerous ski race to show him up—then discovers she still loves him. (Original by A.R.I.)	A.R.I.	50
THE LAST MILE Powerful drama about a ruthless gangster who makes a desperate attempt to escape from the death house to avenge the electrocution of an innocent man. For six terrifying hours, he holds prison officials and state troopers at bay—then walks into their machine gun fire. (Play by John Wexley)	RKO	50
A SODA FOR CYRIL A homey comedy about the goings-on in an American family when they decide to take in three British child refugees. The children's surprise at ice-cream-sodas, baseball—and the absence of Indians and gangsters. (Original by A.R.I.)	A.R.I.	48
HOUDINI Exciting exploits of Houdini, the great magician, showing the dangerous tricks that mystified his audiences but nearly lost him his life. Sample incident: His handcuffs jam at a demonstration, and he nearly drowns under the ice of the Mississippi.	A.R.I.	47
MR. ZERO The true story of the man who gave up his business career to help the forgotten man. How, with his actress wife, he gets jobs for disabled war veterans and turns a Bowery bum into a great painter.	RKO	46
HIGH IRON An action picture of modern railroading. What happens when a fearless young engineer disobeys orders and takes a rickety old locomotive through a mountain blizzard to rescue the passengers of a streamliner marooned by a snowslide. (Harry Bedwell In SATURDAY EVENING POST '40)	A.R.I.	45

		Percentage of Theatergoers Who Say They Would Be "Reasonably Sure" To See Picture
Source		
O'HIGGINS OF CHILE	A.R.I.	43
True adventures of Ambrosio O'Higgins, a witty Irish peddler who becomes ruler of 18th Century Chile. His bravery in fierce warfare with rebellious Indians, his wisdom and justice as "president", make him a national hero—and win him the love of a beautiful Chilean aristocrat.		
EXCURSION	A.R.I.	41
Heart-warming comedy about a Coney Island steamboat captain who feels so sorry for his city-bound passengers, that he heads for the South Seas. Just as the captain and pair of run-away lovers have everyone sold on a tropical paradise, they're stopped by a coast guard cutter. (Play by Victor Wolfson, 1936)		
THE PRAYING COLONELS	A.R.I.	41
Story of the small Southern religious college whose football team made history by licking the tar out of Harvard and Yale. The romantic cause behind it all—a stubborn captain's determination to show up his Yale rival to his sweetheart. (Original by A.R.I.)		
YOU'RE ONLY YOUNG TWICE	A.R.I.	40
Heart-warming comedy about a modern-minded mother's attempts to recapture her lost youth—and her family's efforts to stop her. How she turns the tables on them by suddenly acting very, very old. (Book by Doree Smedley)		
HARMONY COLONY	A.R.I.	40
A lot of screwballs give up their jobs and go off to live in colonies by themselves. Their idea is to have nothing to do with SEX. What happens when their prettiest member tries to "convert" the local policeman. (Original by A.R.I.)		
THE AMISHMAN	A.R.I.	37
A movie about the "Amish", devout Pennsylvania farmers who disapprove of autos, electricity and fancy clothes. What happens when a young Amishman marries a beautiful outsider who doesn't understand his people. (Original by A.R.I.)		
WATER GYPSIES	RKO	34
Comedy drama. An imaginative girl living on an English river barge, believes her dreams of romance in high society have come true when a wealthy artist asks her to pose for him. But the bashful canal-boatman who adores her turns out to be Prince Charming after all. (Novel by A. P. Herbert)		

	Percentage of Theatergoers Who Say They Would Be Source "Reasonably Sure" To See Picture	
MADAME BOVARY	A.R.I.	31
The great French tragedy about a woman married to a small town doctor. Desiring a richer life than she can find with her husband, she tries to escape from reality by having secret love affairs with other men. But it all ends in disillusion and she takes poison. (Novel by Flaubert)		
MARRIAGE MEDDLERS	RKO	31
The story of a great love that overcomes banishment and war. A beautiful Queen escapes from her Kingdom to take refuge in America, where she finds that the famous author who rescued her from assassins, is really the commoner who had been banished from her court because he dared to love her. (Newspaper Serial)		

Princeton, August 14, 1941.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT XCVII

PUBLICITY PENETRATION OF GLORIA SWANSON

On July 18 you asked us to find out how many theatergoers are aware that Gloria Swanson is returning to the screen, and how many have heard about the picture *FATHER TAKES A WIFE*.

The results of a nation-wide poll conducted during the week ending August 2, 1941, reveal that 25 per cent of all regular theatergoers* know that Gloria Swanson is returning to the screen, while 13 per cent have heard about the picture—*FATHER TAKES A WIFE*.

In other words, the publicity for Miss Swanson's return has been rather more successful than the publicity for the RKO picture in which she is returning.

Miss Swanson has been included in the Seventh (July) Audit of Marquee Values. She emerges 102nd out of 113 names. With persons under eighteen she has no measurable marquee value whatsoever.

Such popularity as she does still retain is concentrated among females in the middle and older age groups. Men do not seem to appreciate her.

SURVEY—July 24-30

Can you tell me the title of Gloria Swanson's new picture?

YES, correct:	2 per cent
NO, or incorrect:	98 per cent

Can you tell me the names of any other players in the picture?

YES, correct:	3 per cent
NO, or incorrect:	97 per cent

What else have you heard about the picture?

Correct information:	12 per cent‡
No information, or incorrect:	88 per cent

*Persons who attend at least once a month.

‡Includes many persons who gave correct title or correct other players.

SURVEY—July 29-August 2

Have you heard or read anything about FATHER TAKES A WIFE?

YES: 13 per cent

Do you happen to know whether Gloria Swanson is returning to the screen?

YES: 25 per cent

Princeton, August 8, 1941.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT XCIX

WHY STARS SHOULD MAKE MORE PICTURES

Four weeks ago we reported the average gains and losses of players who had made five pictures, four pictures, three pictures, two pictures, one picture and no picture during the year ending May 1, 1941.

These findings raised an important question: *Why is it* that the players who make fewer than three pictures tend to lose marquee value?

A study just completed by this Institute indicates that the answer to this question is *lack of circulation*.

Motion picture stars and their handlers seldom stop to ask themselves what proportion of the theatergoing public gets to see the pictures they make. It is too easy to assume that any picture which is a success at the box-office is seen by a majority of the customers. There could be no greater fallacy.

The fact is that, with the exception of *GONE WITH THE WIND* and two or three others, no picture released by Hollywood for several years past has been a "success." Even a picture which grosses \$2,000,000 to the picture company is not seen by more than 50 per cent of the regular theatergoers, while a picture which grosses \$750,000 is seen by only one theatergoer in five.

When Mr. Colman made only one picture in the year ending May 1, 1941, approximately 75 per cent of the regular customers had to go a whole year without seeing him on the screen. And absence does not make the heart of a ticket-buyer grow fonder.

The same blurred reasoning which exaggerates the circulation of a "successful" picture, is also inclined to assume that when a player works hard and makes five or six pictures in a year, then the customers get to see that player five or six times—and grow weary.

Even Mr. Zanuck as he emerges from the projection room after looking at Ameche's *nth* picture must sometimes ask himself whether the public is not getting sick of that face. He need not worry. Outside of the picture business only a tiny handful of the public see all Ameche's pictures.

All evidence points to *lack* of pictures as the greatest single danger to a personality's marquee value.

Selecting six personalities who made respectively one, two, three, four, five and six pictures during the last year, we took a series of polls to find out exactly *how often* these personalities had been seen by Mr. Average Citizen. Here are the results:

- (1) JAMES STEWART had made six pictures. Out of every hundred regular theatergoers:

15 did not see any of these pictures
19 saw only one of them
22 saw two of them
23 saw three of them
14 saw four of them
6 saw five of them
only 1 saw all six

- (2) HUMPHREY BOGART had made five pictures. Out of every hundred regular theatergoers:

23 did not see any of these pictures
28 saw only one of them
25 saw two of them
17 saw three of them
6 saw four of them
only 1 saw all five of them

- (3) DON AMECHE had made four pictures. Out of every hundred regular theatergoers:

20 did not see any of these pictures
24 saw only one of them
25 saw two of them
19 saw three of them
only 12 saw all four of them

- (4) GINGER ROGERS had made three pictures. Out of every hundred theatergoers:

23 did not see any of these pictures
38 saw only one of them
27 saw two of them
only 12 saw all three of them

(5) ROSALIND RUSSELL had only three pictures.
For every hundred regular theatergoers:

38 did not see any of these pictures
30 saw one of them
24 saw two of them
only 8 saw all three of them

(6) RONALD COLMAN had made only one picture.
For every hundred regular theatergoers:

25 saw this one picture
75 did not see it, and therefore did not get to
see Mr. Colman at all during that year

These facts can be presented the other way round, in this table:

TWELVE MONTHS ENDING MAY 1, 1941							
	<i>% of theatergoers who did not see player at all</i>	<i>% of theatergoers who saw player once</i>	<i>% twice</i>	<i>% three times</i>	<i>% four times</i>	<i>% five times</i>	<i>% six times</i>
JAMES STEWART	15	19	22	23	14	6	1
HUMPHREY BOGART	23	28	25	17	6	1	0
DON AMECHE	20	24	25	19	12	0	0
GINGER ROGERS	23	38	27	12	12	0	0
ROSALIND RUSSELL	38	30	24	8	0	0	0
RONALD COLMAN	75	25	0	0	0	0	0

Princeton, August 28, 1941

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT 101

MORE ABOUT GLORIA SWANSON

The picture audience is not a standing army. It is a moving parade.

Gloria Swanson made her last picture in 1934. Since that time millions of her admirers have died or grown out of going to the movies. Their places at the box-office have been taken by a generation which has never set eyes on Miss Swanson.

In a nation-wide poll conducted last week, the Institute asked a representative cross-section of theater-goers: "Can you remember ever having seen Gloria Swanson in a movie?"

	YES	NO
	%	%
Ages up to 17 (26% of all admissions)	3	97
Ages 18 to 30 (39% of all admissions)	50	50
Ages 31 up (35% of all admissions)	81	19

So it is that when you ask us to find out in what kind of roles the theater-going public would like to see Gloria Swanson, we can only report that comparatively few theater-goers know anything about her. So far as the majority are concerned she is a newcomer to the screen, almost an unknown quantity. The following comments are typical:

"Never Heard of Her," etc.

Don't know a cock-eyed thing about the madam.

Name isn't familiar.

I don't remember anything about her but the name.

I've just seen pictures of her and she's queer looking.

I don't think I've ever heard her name.

Don't know one thing but I'm sure I've heard or read something about her. Seems that she is a business woman.

Don't know anything about her. She's new to me.

The name sounds familiar but I really have no idea what she is like.

Never heard of her. I've heard of Mary Pickford though.

"Too Young to Remember Her"

Well — I was too young. She never made too much of an impression on me.

It's been years since I saw her and I was too young to think much about it.

I don't know anything about her except I know mother likes her.

I just heard my mother talking about her. I don't know.

My father thinks she was wonderful. I don't remember her very well.

"Too Old for a Comeback"

She would be good as somebody's mother; she is too old now for a sophisticated role.

I don't think she'd make a good comeback—she's too old. She wouldn't make a hit of it unless it's in character roles.

She's an old woman, ain't she?

I really don't think her comeback will be successful—she's too old. She was all right in her day.

I've read about her. She was good in her time but I don't think she should stage a comeback. She has had her day.

She was a good old actress.

I think she's pretty, but a little old for a comeback.

I remember her as a very big name in the silent movies; I would like to see what she is like now.

I'd like to see what she's like after all these years.

It's wonderful—she has kept her age so well.

"A Vamp"

She was a dramatic actor, and I don't like "dramatics"—I prefer comedy.

I think she was a little corny. She over-acts.

I think she plays the part of a vamp.

She was a vamp and pretty good, I think.

She always was sorta silly.

She was an exotic sort.

Don't like her looks—awfully "made up" looking.

She reminds me of a vampire more than anything else.

I never did like her—she was too dramatic for me.

Very affected and somewhat disgusting. She shows her teeth too much.

Didn't care much for her—she played sirens.

"Clothes Horse"

Very glamorous—wears clothes beautifully.

Wears slinky clothes.

Good actress, attractive—wears clothes well.

She's a clothes horse.

I was too young to know if she was a good actress. Her clothes impressed me I remember.

"Liked Her Singing"

She's got a nice singing voice.
I think she used to sing and I liked her singing.
She sang in the movie I saw. I'd like to see her again—they ought to give her a chance.
I thought she was a singer.
I'm sure she sings. I heard her on the radio once.

Poor Public Relations

I think she ought to be given a better personal reputation.
I think she's had a bunch of husbands but she's a good actress.

Miscellaneous

She was a good actress, but so many of our new actresses can beat her in looks and acting.
I guess she's O.K. She's not much to look at, but I suppose she could play the modern mother type or the gay divorcee type.
She's very nice—adorable—and I love her. I'm glad she's coming back. (Female, aged 34).
I have forgotten her. Think we all should.
She used to be very good, but she is dated now.
Used to be very fond of her when she was quite the rage. Heard she made a public appearance the other day at a baseball game in Newark.
Remember her very vaguely. I read that she was quite good in "The Trespasser," her last picture.
I saw her in a show called "Beyond the Rocks" and I will never forget her.
I saw her last in "Uncle Tom's Cabin." She was very good in that.

That is how things stand today. Perhaps public opinion will change after release of FATHER TAKES A WIFE.

Princeton, August 25, 1941.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT 102

"I *Ought* To Like This One—But I Don't"

On August 11 the Institute received instructions to measure the audience appeal of a picture about SAMUEL GOMPERS. No cast was specified.

The results of a nation-wide poll reveal that this subject possesses very little audience appeal. Only 45 per cent of the persons interviewed expressed any interest in the idea—which places it in the lowest category, along with such properties as THE DEVIL AND DANIEL WEBSTER, ABE LINCOLN IN ILLINOIS, JOHNNY BELINDA and our own THE AMISHMAN.*

Here is the vote by different segments of the ticket-buying public:

<u>INCOME GROUPS</u>		%
Prosperous	(Over \$50 per week)	49
Upper Middle	(\$30 to \$50 per week)	47
Middle	(\$20 to \$30 per week)	46
Poor	(Under \$20 per week)	40

<u>AGE GROUPS</u>		
Ages 12 - 17		39
Ages 18 - 30		45
Ages 31 - up		50

MALES

FEMALES

~~38~~ 51
~~51~~ 38

It might come as something of a shock to the American Federation of Labor to learn that GOMPERS interests the rich more than he interests the poor.

* See Report XCVI.

Those persons who find themselves in revolt against the frivolous formulas favored by the theater-going public, are always complaining that—in the words of Donald Ogden Stewart—"the *poor* man cannot go into a movie theater and see upon the screen the real expression of his problems and the deep understanding of his struggle against life."

Our findings on this subject point to the fact that the only people who want to see the poor man's struggles are the rich men. For example, *GRAPES OF WRATH* was far more popular with the prosperous than with the poor. It is the same with *GOMPERS*.

Audience reactions to *GOMPERS* conform to the typical pattern of all 'prestige' properties: unashamed boredom on the part of most people, with a tell-tale sprinkling of those good intentions which don't mature when the crucial test comes—at the box office.

I ought to like this one, but I don't.

It would probably be a very heavy picture.

Too dry.

I don't like those serious ones.

My idea of amusement and entertainment does not call for such a story.

Sounds too boring.

The story is too full of present day worries.

You see this in life and I don't like to go to a show to see it.

You read so much of this stuff in the papers all the time that I wouldn't care for it in the movies.

I'm not much on biographies—I like to see something funny.

I would like to see it 'cause I've studied it at school (a non-sequitur).

It's heavy—I studied about him in history.

It sounds too much like history.

I have studied about Gompers in Sociology.

Too much Socialist and this and that in it.

*If you understand labor problems it would be all right, but
I don't.*

It tends to politics and I don't go for that.

The low vote from the younger customers is interesting. Said a typical boy in Indianapolis: "*Not much of a picture for a kid. It's more for an older person, I think*".

We would welcome an opportunity to test this property *with cast*. A trial survey using PAUL MUNI indicated a box-office expectancy below 80 per cent on the RKO Classification.

Princeton, August 27, 1941.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT 103

49 MORE STORY TESTS

On August 14 we sent you a report which summarized the results of our polls on twenty-nine story ideas. On the following pages you will find a summary of results on forty-nine more stories.

The percentage figures must not be interpreted literally. They are not in any sense a box-office forecast.

For example, it would be absurd to suppose that 69 per cent of all theatergoers will see LOU GEHRIG — probably not more than 30 per cent will actually see that picture—whoever is cast in it.

Nevertheless, these figures do give a fair indication of the comparative value of the different story ideas—*isolated from such other box-office factors as cast, publicity penetration, etc.*

A story which receives a vote in excess of 60 per cent may be considered a very valuable piece of property.

A story which rates between 50 per cent and 60 per cent is average-to-good.

A story which rates below 50 per cent must be considered a liability to the producer who has the misfortune to invest in it.

The reader will find it is impossible to study the figures contained in these two reports without drawing broad conclusions as to the type of story in which theatergoers seem to be most interested at this time.

		Percentage of Theatergoers Who Say They Would Be "Reasonably Sure" To See Picture	
Source			
LOU GEHRIG	A.R.I.	69	
True life story of the boy from the New York slums who won his chance with the Yankees and became a baseball hero—then when he was stricken with paralysis, took a job to help the boys who had idolized him.			
THE PASSIONATE WITCH	A.R.I.	64	
Screwball comedy, by the author of "Topper", about a beautiful girl who bewitches the town's wealthiest bachelor so that he can hear what everyone is thinking about. How this gets him into and out of all sorts of hilarious situations. (Posthumous novel by Thorne Smith)			
THE MAYO BROTHERS	A.R.I.	64	
The drama of modern surgery, and its development from the crude methods of fifty years ago, told in this story about two doctors and their clinic in Minnesota. How the emergency hospital they organized to care for the victims of a tornado became a world famous medical center.			
THE DESERT SONG	A.R.I.	61	
Sigmund Romberg's musical romance about a French Legionnaire who is also the mysterious leader of native revolts against his cruel commanding officer. What happens when his sweetheart decides she loves the desert outlaw. (Made in 1929)			
RICKENBACKER	RKO	61	
Exciting adventures of Eddie Rickenbacker. How the dare-devil auto racer deserted the race track to become America's ace pilot in the first World War—shooting down more German planes than any other flyer.			
ALOHA MEANS GOOD-BY	A.R.I.	58	
Adventures of an American Army Intelligence Officer in Hawaii, on the trail of sabotage agents. What happens when he falls in love with a beautiful heiress—then discovers she's helping the enemy. (Serial by Robert Carson in S.E.P., 1941)			
WAR GIRL	A.R.I.	58	
Thrilling war-time adventures of a daring American girl who volunteers as army truck driver and anti-aircraft gunner somewhere in England — and her romance with the handsome leader of an R.A.F. bombing squadron. ('True' serial edited by Keith Ayling in Liberty, 1941)			
THE MAGNIFICENT AMBERSONS	RKO	58	
From shirtsleeves to riches and back in three generations — Booth Tarkington's novel about a wealthy small-town family. What happens when the spoiled son is forced to take a job as a factory laborer.			

		Percentage of Theatergoers Who Say They Would Be "Reasonably Sure" To See Picture
Source		
MONEY TO BURN	A.R.I.	57
Light-hearted comedy of love in the U. S. Treasury — where a pretty typist and her boy friend wish for money enough to get married. What happens when he receives a pay-check accidentally made out for \$1,000,000 instead of \$100. (Based on an incident reported in the press)		
YOUNG DEMPSEY	A.R.I.	55
Rough and tumble true life story of Jack Dempsey. How the Colorado ranch boy worked as bronco buster and silver miner to develop the knockout punch that carried him from \$2 fights in bar-rooms to the heavyweight championship.		
REMARRYING PETE	A.R.I.	54
Modern comedy with sparkling lines — about a thrice-married artist who's trying to remarry his first wife. His embarrassment when his small daughter decides he ought to reconsider the others too — and brings the three temperamental wives together for a country weekend. (Story by Whitfield Cook in Redbook, 1941)		
THE STUDENT PRINCE	A.R.I.	54
From the popular musical romance by Sigmund Romberg. A handsome prince, pretending to be an ordinary university student, falls in love with a pretty barmaid. What happens when his royal father finds out about it. (Made in 1927)		
WAIKIKI AND BACK	A.R.I.	54
Romantic comedy about a bachelor photographer for a picture magazine who's assigned to cover a gorgeous model's first trip to Hawaii — but his hard-hearted boss has told her the photographer has a wife and six children back home. (Story by Robert Carson L.H.J., 1941)		
FARAWAY ISLAND	A.R.I.	53
J. B. Priestley's adventure story about a man and girl who are strangers until each inherits half of a map to buried treasure on a desert island. How they outwit savages and rivals to get there.		
SISTER CARRIE	RKO	51
Based on Theodore Dreiser's dramatic real life story of a working girl in poor surroundings who step by step fights her way to fame as a stage star — and greatness as a woman. Though her marriage to a weak man brings heartbreak to them both, she rises above suffering to find new peace. (Novel by Dreiser)		

		Percentage of Theatergoers Who Say They Would Be Source "Reasonably Sure" To See Picture
THE CHICAGO METHOD	RKO	50
Action-packed comedy. An American hooper persuades a British General to let him try Chicago gangster methods on the Germans. Armed with sawed-off shotguns, he leads his "gang" on a surprise raid in Germany and captures a group of Nazi big-shots. (Original by George Murphy)		
HURRAY I'M FIRED	A.R.I.	50
Comedy about a bookkeeper who has always wanted to be a bum. When he's fired, he delightedly sets out to be one — but finds, to his disgust, that bookkeeping is easier. (Original by A.R.I.)		
OCCUPATION: WIDOW	A.R.I.	50
A beautiful cabaret singer poses as a Nazi spy to get information for her sweetheart's anti-Nazi activities. How she tricks Nazi big-wigs into publicly accusing each other of treason. (Serial by William C. White, Collier's, 1940)		
KID TINSEL	A.R.I.	50
Comedy about a fashion designer who insists on managing her own inheritance — a gentlemanly prize fighter. He hates being owned by a girl and doublecrosses her — only to realize he loves her. (Serial by Octavus Roy Cohen in Collier's 1940)		
WEEKEND FOR THREE	RKO	49
Modern romantic comedy about a girl who is losing her husband to the advertising business. Deciding to fight a rival with a rival, she invites a former beau for the weekend. Her husband rises to the bait beautifully, but the plan backfires when her old sweetheart tries to become a permanent house-guest. (Original by Budd Schulberg)		
SONS	A.R.I.	49
Sequel to Pearl Buck's "The Good Earth"—about a cruel-looking but kind-hearted Chinese war lord and his beautiful, traitorous wife. He spends a lifetime building a powerful army, hoping his son will carry on and become China's greatest war lord — only to find his son wants to be a farmer. (Novel by Pearl Buck)		
MOBY DICK	A.R.I.	48
The vengeful voyage of peg-legged Captain Ahab to capture Moby Dick, the vicious white whale who had chewed off his leg. The superstitious crew threatens mutiny, but mad Captain Ahab drives them on and on until he sights his quarry. Three days the death battle rages — ending with Moby Dick swimming victoriously away from the ship's wreckage. (Classic by Herman Melville)		

		Percentage of Theatergoers Who Say They Would Be "Reasonably Sure" To See Picture
Source		
MR. PINKIE	RKO	48
A rollicking Cinderella comedy about a good-natured English bartender from a sleepy West Indies Island, who stands Hollywood on its ear. How he poses as an English Lord, transforms a Brooklyn dancer into a movie star and changes a prim governess into a romantic vagabond willing to share his lazy life.		
WHO WALK ALONE	A.R.I.	47
The unusual and dramatic story of a young American soldier who returns from the Philippines to marry his sweetheart — then discovers he has leprosy. How he keeps the truth from her, and finds courage to go on living — alone. (Novel by Perry Burgess)		
SILAS MARNER	University of Ohio	47
Adapted from George Eliot's romantic story of a young weaver who turns into a bitter miser when his sweetheart betrays him. Then even his gold is stolen. Half crazed, he believes that a little golden-haired girl represents his lost treasure, and then finds that through her he has again won friendship and love. (Classic by George Eliot)		
JOHNNY BELINDA	RKO	47
The tender love story of a neglected deaf mute girl and a young doctor who opens a new life to her by teaching her the sign language. What happens when the neighbors misunderstand and run him out of town as her seducer. (Play by Elmer Harris, Broadway, 1940)		
OUT OF THE FRYING PAN	A.R.I.	47
Amusing antics of six stage-struck boys and girls who take an apartment — no love allowed — above a Broadway producer they hope to impress. What happens when the producer and a disapproving father show up at the same time. (Play by Francis Swann 1941)		
LORNA DOONE	University of Ohio	46
The love story of a young English farmer and his beautiful sweetheart, who is held captive in the mountain hideout of a gang of daring outlaws. How he leads a band of enraged farmers against the outlaws and drives them from the country. (Classic by Blackmore)		
THE COWARD	A.R.I.	46
The night before war breaks out between Lyria and Jordania, a flying officer's wife leaves him for the brilliant squadron leader — then learns that he has sent her husband on a bombing flight which he was too cowardly to attempt himself. (Original by Alfred Max)		

	Source	Percentage of Theatergoers Who Say They Would Be "Reasonably Sure" To See Picture
DUST IN THE AFTERNOON Baseball drama about a rookie pitcher with a prison record and jittery nerves. When he finally learns how to leave his personal worries off the playing-field, he leads his team to the World Series. (Serial by Holmes Alexander, Sept. 1940)	A.R.I.	46
GREENMANTLE A sequel to Alfred Hitchcock's "The 39 Steps". In enemy territory as a spy, a British Major learns that a fake religious leader is rousing the Moslem East to unite on Germany's side of the war. Narrowly escaping death by exposure, drowning and bullets, he and his companions upset the German plot and turn the course of the war in Britain's favor. (Novel by John Buchan)	A.R.I.	45
SAMUEL GOMPERS True life story of the Grand Old Man of labor. How the poor immigrant cigar-maker from New York's East Side became America's Labor Boss — battling against socialists and pacifists to pull American workers together during World War I.	RKO	45
JUNIOR MISS Light-hearted comedy about a chubby kid sister of 13 in the agonizing process of growing up. What happens when she meets the "sophisticated" 15-year-old boy who's supposed to take her to her first party — IF he likes her. (Book by Sally Benson)	A.R.I.	45
LADY FROM SANTA CLARA Exciting adventures of a young American engineer in the interior of Cuba, who falls in love with a beautiful Senorita. How he wins her by helping her and her statesman father to escape during a revolution. (Story by Thomas Rourke in Colliers, 1941)	A.R.I.	44
TAXI Big-city drama about the friendship of a taxi-driver and a cop. How they capture two mad-dened gunmen who run wild on their crowded corner — the taxi-driver giving his life to save his friend. (Based on incident reported in the press, 1941)	A.R.I.	43
MODERN POMPADOUR The true story behind the downfall of Rumania, and the part played by King Carol's redhaired sweetheart, Magda Lupescu. How she tried to make a wise king out of a spoiled prince — and lost him his throne. (Serial in Liberty, 1941)	A.R.I.	43

		Percentage of Theatergoers Who Say They Would Be "Reasonably Sure" To See Picture	
Source			
GRAND CENTRAL MARKET	RKO	43	
A glimpse of the lives of half a dozen people—a jobless song writer and his pretty bride, a soft-hearted tough guy, a waitress and a crooked cafe owner. Through the hubbub of a city vegetable market where their paths cross, their separate stories of adventure and romance unfold. (From a story by the author of <i>Grand Hotel</i> .) (Original by Vicki Baum)			
WOMEN ARE POISON	RKO	42	
Action-packed drama about a prize-fight manager who thinks women are poison — especially when his promising young heavyweight falls in love with a night club singer. What happens when the manager breaks up their romance and the girl discovers that the only way to win back her prize-fighter is to make him lose the title bout. (Original by Fay and Michael Kanin)			
BITTER CREEK	RKO	42	
Romantic adventure in the early West — about a woman-hating young rancher, a clever confidence man, and a pretty girl. What happens when the girl's father starts an Indian War by rustling cattle, the girl is captured by the Indians, and the rancher is shot by his Chieftain friend while trying to rescue her. (Novel by James Boyd)			
CABIN IN THE SKY	A.R.I.	41	
All-Negro musical in which a church-going wife enlists the aid of "De Lawd's General" to save her happy-go-lucky husband from Lucifer, Jr. — the Devil's son. (Broadway Musical 1940)			
RIVER FEUD	A.R.I.	40	
Modern romance of steamboating on the Mississippi. A boy pilot and the daughter of a shanty-boater call a private truce in the ancient feud between steamboaters and shanty-boaters. (Story by James Street, S.E.P. 1942)			
PRESTER JOHN	A.R.I.	40	
A movie made from John Buchan's adventure story about a young Englishman in South Africa. Single-handed, he defeats the rebellion led by a Negro preacher, who believes himself to be the re-incarnation of Prester John, the legendary King of Africa. (Novel by John Buchan)			

		Percentage of Theatergoers Who Say They Would Be "Reasonably Sure" To See Picture	
Source			
MR. LITTLEJOHN	A.R.I.	39	
Light-hearted comedy about a genial little man who gets so fed up with business worries and a nagging wife, that he runs away from it all. He has a gloriously carefree trip across the country — until he's mistaken for a notorious criminal who's wanted DEAD or ALIVE. (<i>Novel by Martin Flavin, 1940</i>)			
MUSIC CAMP	A.R.I.	39	
Comedy with music about the rivalry and romance of a boy and girl pianist at Interlochen — famous music camp for high school symphony musicians on the shores of a Michigan lake. (<i>Original by A.R.I.</i>)			
REBEL EDITOR	A.R.I.	38	
Dramatic flight of Memphis' rebel editor, who published taunts at the Yankees even as he fled before their armies. How his sweetheart helped him to escape when Sherman marched through Georgia, vowing to silence him. (<i>Original by A.R.I.</i>)			
THIS ABOVE ALL	A.R.I.	37	
The dramatic love story of a disillusioned hero of Dunkirk who is ready to quit the Army, and a pretty member of the Women's Auxiliary Forces. How she persuades him to go back — knowing she'll lose him. (<i>Best-seller by Eric Knight, 1941</i>)			
THEATRE	A.R.I.	36	
Somerset Maugham's smart comedy about a great actress, who can't stop acting, even off stage. What happens when she imagines herself in love with one of her son's friends — and he turns her down for her pretty understudy. (<i>Novel by Somerset Maugham, Redbook, 1941</i>)			
HOLY SUBURB	A.R.I.	35	
Homey comedy about a Nebraska farm family's determination to get an education and do the proper thing in a small religious college town. Their embarrassment over their impulsive and zealous "Papa". (<i>Novel by Elizabeth Atkins, 1941</i>)			
HE'S MY BABY	A.R.I.	30	
A so human story of mother love — about a grandmother who is glad to take care of her daughter's baby while the daughter steps out night after night. What happens when the baby gets hurt, and grandmother gets the blame. (<i>Story by Marguerite Eysen in McCall's, 1941</i>)			

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT 104

PUBLICITY PENETRATION OF PARACHUTE BATTALION

During the week following its world premiere in Atlanta, the publicity penetration of PARACHUTE BATTALION rose from seven per cent to eight per cent.

Seventeen months ago we reported on the effectiveness of two similar premieres—VIRGINIA CITY and YOUNG TOM EDISON (Port Huron). At that time we concluded that the value of such premieres depends on three factors:

1. *The cost of the premiere in relation to the cost of paid advertising.*
2. *The importance of the immediate vicinity as a source of revenue.*

It was found that the effect of these premieres is concentrated in the immediate vicinity—Nevada, Michigan, Georgia or wherever it may be.

3. *The value of the locality for purposes of national exploitation.*

In this connection it was found that the governing factors were:

- A. The accessibility of the locale to columnists and critics—not critics from Atlanta, Charlotte, Montgomery, Chattanooga and Nashville, but critics from New York and Hollywood.
- B. The newsworthiness and color of the locale itself, distinct from the picture.
- C. The inclusion of the name of the locale in the title of the picture (DODGE CITY, VIRGINIA CITY, etc.).

We also found evidence to support the conclusion that the value of these premieres was decreasing as they were becoming more commonplace.

In the light of this early report it is not difficult to see why the Atlanta premiere for PARACHUTE BATTALION did not yield a larger increase in national publicity penetration.

It is a pity that the penetration of this picture is not higher, since its "want-to-see" vote stands at 66 per cent—which is greater than the "want-to-see" vote on such comparatively costly pictures as MEET JOHN DOE and MY LIFE WITH CAROLINE. In fact, 66 per cent is only two points below the average for A pictures.

If there were ever a medium-budget picture which justified an "emergency barrage" of paid advertising, this is it.

Princeton, September 16, 1941.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT 105

TITLES

It has been said that no title ever saved a bad picture or killed a good one. That may or may not be true—this Institute does not yet possess enough data to prove the point one way or the other. What is true is that two titles under consideration for a picture have been found to differ in pulling power by as much as four to one.

Even if the optimum title itself did not amount to more than five per cent of a picture's total box-office appeal, it is worth taking steps to find out which of the various titles suggested is the optimum.

For example, the title *THE BAND PLAYED ON* out-pulls the title *SYN-COPATION* by four to one. Assuming that the optimum title *THE BAND PLAYED ON* would amount to only five per cent of the picture's total pulling power, then the fact that the title *SYN-COPATION* was finally selected may well cost the company \$12,000.

On the same basis, the fact that the optimum title *SUSPICION* was finally selected for Mr. Hitchcock's picture, instead of the original title *BEFORE THE FACT*, may well result in a net gain to RKO of \$15,000.

It may be an excellent practice to organize studio contests in search of titles, but it would save some expensive fumbling if the theatergoers themselves, through the medium of this Institute, were given a say in selecting the final winner.

Indeed, there can be no insurmountable reason why the titles of *all* RKO pictures should not be referred to the Institute for polling.

SUMMARY OF EIGHT TITLE TESTS

(In each case the winning title is assigned the value 100)

THEY KNEW WHAT THEY WANTED	100
THE OTHER MAN	72
YOU CAN'T BE TOO CAREFUL	100
LUCKY PARTNERS	92

THE DEVIL & DANIEL WEBSTER	100
ALL THAT MONEY CAN BUY	69
THE BAND PLAYED ON	100
SYNCPATION	27
SUSPICION	100
BEFORE THE FACT	54
THREE FOR A WEDDING	100
A GIRL A GUY & A GOB	79
I'M STILL ALIVE	100
STUNT MAN	50
CALIFORNIA	100
BLOOD WILL TELL	30

Princeton, September 16, 1941.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT 106

NEWSREELS

In a nationwide survey conducted between September 27 and October 3, 1941, the Institute measured the attitude of theatergoers towards the newsreels. The questions asked were those suggested by Mr. George J. Schaefer.

1. Which, if any, of the newsreels do you prefer?

To begin with, we find that 34 per cent cannot recall the name of any newsreel. Those who are able to do so vote as follows:

	%
PARAMOUNT	16
MOVIETONE	13
PATHE	9
NEWS OF THE DAY	1
UNIVERSAL	1
OTHERS	3
NO PREFERENCE	23

Notice that 57 per cent of all theatergoers either cannot recall the name of any newsreel, or are without an opinion as to which is the best. Many others admit that the newsreel selected is the only one they can remember. So far as the majority of theatergoers are concerned, all newsreels seem to be pretty much the same; there is little comparative criticism or discrimination.

2. With what newsreel do you associate the rooster?

	%
PATHE	49
Don't Know	41
Movietone	3
Paramount	3
Universal	2
News of the Day	1
Others	1

3. Do you believe the newsreels carry too much or too little war material?

	<i>Too Much</i>	<i>Too Little</i>	<i>About Right</i>
	%	%	%
All persons interviewed	35	22	43
All males	25	30	45
All females	44	14	42

Forty-eight per cent of those who think that newsreels carry too much war material give as their reason that war is too *unpleasant*. Many respondents say that they have sons, sweethearts or other relatives in the army, and they therefore hate being reminded about the realities of war. Only eight per cent of those who think that newsreels carry too much war material give a reason in terms of *propaganda*—which is only three per cent of all persons interviewed.

4. Which of the following newsreel subjects do you like or dislike?

	<i>Like</i>	<i>Dislike</i>
	%	%
FOOTBALL GAMES	77	23
NATIONAL DEFENSE	77	23
WAR PICTURES	62	38
BEAUTY CONTESTS	52	48
HORSE RACES	48	52
FASHION SHOWS	47	53

There are some remarkable differences in the vote of males and females, as may be seen from the following figures:

	<i>Liked By</i>	<i>Liked By</i>
	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>
	%	%
FOOTBALL GAMES	82	73
NATIONAL DEFENSE	88	66
WAR PICTURES	71	52
BEAUTY CONTESTS	27	76
HORSE RACES	57	40
FASHION SHOWS	20	73

Perhaps the most startling feature of these results is the fact that beauty contests should emerge more popular with females than with males. However, this finding is in line with all our discoveries as to the importance of self-identification in the field of motion pictures—how 86 per cent of the female stars are more popular with women than with men, etc. It is the same in advertising: The old theory that the way to interest women in an advertisement is to show a picture of a man, or the way to interest a man is to show a picture of a woman, has no real foundation in fact. *The best way to attract women is to have women in the advertisement. The best way to attract men is by having men.*

	<i>Attention Value</i>
	<i>of Advertisements</i>
	<i>+ or - Average</i>
	<i>Females</i>
	%
Men only in main illustration	-17
Women only in main illustration	+ 7

The unpopularity of horse races is significant. We have previously found that this subject interests the theatergoing public less than it interests the motion picture community in Hollywood. When respondents were asked whether they followed the news (in newspapers) on baseball, football, horse racing and tennis, results were as follows:

	%
Football	33
Baseball	24
Tennis	9
Horse racing	8

In another survey 63 per cent of all persons interviewed said they had never attended a horse race in all their lives. In response to another question 82 per cent said that they had not placed any wager on the result of a horse race during the past year.

Princeton, October 8, 1941

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT 107

LONA HENRY

When a story does badly in our surveys, it is generally possible to find in the comments recorded by the interviewers one or more tangible reasons for its lack of audience acceptance. Sometimes, however, a story comes along which does badly from general lack of interest; theatergoers cannot tell us *why* they are not interested—they just fail to react one way or the other. LONA HENRY is just such a grey case.

In a nationwide survey conducted by the Institute this story received a vote of 46 per cent, which places it in the Third Class.

We received many comments to the effect that LONA HENRY is "ordinary", "stereotyped", "awfully old stuff", "nothing new", etc., and some more plain-spoken expressions of opinion, such as that voiced by a contractor in Arkansas—"it's a god-damned lot of baloney". But such vague, general reactions tell us little, if anything about *why* ticket-buyers don't care for the story.

It received a lower vote from males than any story tested during the last six months, and its appeal to females was only average. Readers will recall that males are responsible for almost exactly *half* the box-office dollar. (See COMPOSITION OF THE MOTION PICTURE AUDIENCE, Report LI and Report LXXXII)

The Institute will continue to expose LONA HENRY to the theatergoing public, using longer synopses than those employed in our first tests—in the hope that the public will then recognize the qualities which persuaded your company to purchase this property. It must be remembered, however, that it is very rare for a story to do better in long synopses than in short. Our studies have demonstrated that the public endorses the old axiom: "*if it is a good story you can tell it to me in three sentences*".

Princeton, October 28, 1941

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT 108

CARMEN

Mr. Friedrich Feher has a plan for using the Metropolitan Opera Company to make films of famous operas at a cost below \$300,000, including the services of the Metropolitan's most famous stars. He figures that NBC's Saturday afternoon broadcasts have created a large new market for opera; that he would make the pictures in English; and that the low budgets involved would make it possible to sell them as second features.

The results of a survey just completed by the Institute indicate that a film of the opera CARMEN (reputedly the most popular of all) would be an unmitigated failure. Rarely have we encountered such categorical opposition to any idea.

Approximately half the persons interviewed said they didn't care for opera—and said so in no uncertain terms. "It would bore me to death", said the owner of a dry goods store. "I can't stand them squawkers", was the reaction of a laundry driver.

The idea is pregnant with prestige—dread element. It seems to step on the inferiority feelings of a large segment of the theatergoing public. "I don't like that high tone stuff—I'm not educated enough for that", said a filling station attendant.

Breakdowns of our findings identify the typical opera addict as a wealthy, middle-aged-to-elderly woman living in a large city.

The comments reveal that the property, under that title, cannot tap any market broader than the opera market. To the public at large CARMEN means only one thing—opera, squawkers and boredom; only a very few respondents can get over that hurdle and take any interest in the story for its own sake.

The Metropolitan radio program once achieved a Crossley rating of 14 per cent, but its total audience has never been as large as this figure would indicate. Crossley relies upon telephone interviews, and opera appeals more to persons in the upper income groups who normally have telephones than to the rest of the population. Furthermore, Crossley's operation is confined to large cities where opera enjoys its greatest popularity. Finally, the fact that the broadcast lasts for three hours gives it an unfair advantage in any research procedure which relies upon recall.

Princeton, October 14, 1941

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT 109

THE RED PONY

The results of a nationwide survey recently completed by the Institute show that the theme of *THE RED PONY* does not enjoy a wide appeal. The actual vote recorded was 42 per cent, which places it in the classification of those stories which "must be considered a liability to the producer" (See recent reports on 29 STORY TESTS and 49 STORY TESTS).

It must be emphasized that our tests were confined to the basic theme, without reference either to treatment or to cast.

THE RED PONY is very strong with children under eighteen; this is the age group in which love of animals reaches its peak. "I would like that because I like ponies", said a 12 year old girl in Reading, Pennsylvania. The story is strongest of all with boys—a clear case of self-identification.

It is also fairly strong with middle-aged and elderly females, in some of whom it touches the maternal instinct. "Yes—I'd see it, maybe because I've a son of my own about that age; it's something real." Said an old lady of seventy summers: "I'd take one of my grandchildren."

It is with the important age-group eighteen to thirty that *THE RED PONY* falls short. "I think this is more for young people." "No, I don't want to see it, but I think it would be good for kids." "This is more for a child." "Infantile." The Institute makes no attempt to justify this lamentable point of view; we can only report that it exists and is widespread.

The property gathers some strength from the name of its author, many of our respondents remarking on their familiarity with Steinbeck's work. But even Steinbeck fans cannot be fully counted on to support the film. Almost half the persons who commented on the reference to Steinbeck in the synopsis indicated that they preferred this author in his *GRAPES-OF-WRATH* manner: "I like John Steinbeck's books, but this type of movie does not appeal to me. More for children."

Princeton, October 14, 1941

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT 110

JOURNEY INTO FEAR

Readers of Report XCVI "RESULTS OF 29 STORY TESTS" and Report 103 "49 MORE STORY TESTS" will recall the Institute's classification of stories under three headings: (1) those whose acceptance value is so high that they would make successful A pictures without the assistance of any big marquee name, (2) those whose acceptance is *average*—with big marquee names and high publicity penetration they would make successful pictures, (3) those whose acceptance is so low that they must be considered a crippling liability to the producer who has the misfortune to invest in them.

The results of a survey just completed by the Institute show that Eric Ambler's *JOURNEY INTO FEAR* belongs in the third classification.

Breakdowns show that the theme has a strong appeal for adolescent boys, but it is seriously weak with every other segment of the ticket-buying public. With female theatergoers it received fewer votes than any property tested by the Institute since *SAMUEL GOMPERS*.

Many people declare that they are "fed up" with stories of this type. "Too much about it in the newspapers." "I saw too many Nazi pictures, I dream about it now."

The Institute suppressed the fact that the hero is an *Englishman*. Past results have shown that, other things being equal, theatergoers are more interested in American than in foreign characters. We have not the slightest doubt that *JOURNEY INTO FEAR* would have received an even lower vote if the nationality of the hero had been divulged.

The fact that the action takes place in Turkey and the Aegean is also an obstacle to audience acceptance. "Frankly, I don't care what goes on in Turkey", said a clerical worker in a department store in Portland, Oregon. "We've seen too many of those foreign pictures of spies and such", said the wife of a grocery store manager in St. Joseph, Missouri.

It must be emphasized that our tests were confined to the basic theme, without any reference to the treatment, to Orson Welles, or to the cast.

Princeton, October 14, 1941

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT 111

PASSAGE FROM BORDEAUX

The Institute has just completed a series of nationwide tests on *PASSAGE FROM BORDEAUX*, first without cast and then with Lucille Ball, James Craig and James Gleason.

The results of these tests show that the audience acceptance value of the story of *PASSAGE FROM BORDEAUX* is only just great enough to place it in our second category of stories—"Those whose acceptance is average—with big marquee names and high publicity penetration they could make successful A pictures."

It follows, inevitably, that when you cast minor personalities in a medium-grade story of this type, you emerge with a product which does not stand a good chance of becoming a successful A picture. *PASSAGE FROM BORDEAUX* must have marquee names capable of selling tickets in their own right if it is to be successfully sold as an A.

The power of Lucille Ball, James Craig and James Gleason to sell tickets is negligible; and the substitution of Victor Mature for James Craig would make little difference one way or the other. Not one of these personalities ranks among the first one hundred.

When *PASSAGE FROM BORDEAUX* was tested with cast only seven per cent of the theatergoers who expressed a desire to see the picture made any mention of the players as a factor in their choice. This represents one of the lowest contributions of cast to total acceptance value ever recorded by the Institute.

While a few persons see in *PASSAGE FROM BORDEAUX* a "thriller" and an exciting drama, a far greater proportion of the ticket-buying public complain with monotonous regularity that it is "the same old stuff". In this connection the following comments were typical:

"I seen a dozen like that—guys being chased all over by a bunch of sneaky looking secret police."

—a sixteen year old boy in Binghamton.

"No—it's propaganda and that is the general idea of all these kind."

—a twenty-five year old salesman in Trenton.

Respondents likened PASSAGE FROM BORDEAUX to ARISE MY LOVE, MAN HUNT, UNDERGROUND, ESCAPE, SO ENDS OUR NIGHT and ONE NIGHT IN LISBON.

In our polls on PASSAGE FROM BORDEAUX, innumerable theatergoers suggest that the theme is running thin, which further indicates that it must be injected with exceptional marquee value if it is to hold its own as an A picture. Said a stenographer in Philadelphia: "*The stars don't mean much but the story doesn't sound so bad.*"

In one of our tests we indicated that William L. Shirer would actively collaborate on the screen play. This fact resulted in a net increase of one per cent in the vote. While some theatergoers reacted favorably to Shirer's name, there were others who were frightened away from the picture by our reference to him: "*that Shirer is more for serious thinkers.*" It is probable that any label of this kind tends to identify the picture as a serious, almost documentary property; thereby it eliminates almost as many customers as it attracts.

Princeton, October 20, 1941.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT 112

17 MORE STORY TESTS

On August 14 and September 5 the Institute sent you summaries of the results of seventy-eight story tests. In the following table you will find the results on seventeen more stories.

The Institute divides all stories into three classes:

First Class Those whose audience acceptance value is so great that they could make successful A pictures even without the assistance of any big marquee name. To qualify for inclusion in this class a story must receive a vote in excess of 60 per cent.

Second Class Those whose acceptance value is *average*—given big marquee names and high publicity penetration they could make successful A pictures. To qualify for inclusion in this class a story must receive a vote between 50 and 60 per cent.

Third Class Those whose acceptance value is so low that they must be considered a crippling liability to the producer who has the misfortune to invest in them. Even with a major marquee name they could not be expected to make successful A pictures. All stories which receive a vote lower than 50 per cent belong in this class.

With a First Class story you can—perhaps—get along without a star. With a strong star you can get by with a Second Class story. But when you find yourself saddled with Third Class stories and no stars, there is little, if any, chance of your pictures selling as A pictures.

		<i>Source</i>	<i>%</i>
First Class	FLIGHT SURGEON Newspaper serial, purchased by 20th Century Fox	—	69
	JOAN OF PARIS Screen play by Charles Bennett	RKO	60
	THE GREAT ICE Admiral Peary's quest for the North Pole	A.R.I.	60
	OUT OF THE NIGHT Jan Valtin's best-seller	A.R.I.	60
Second Class	BRAZILIAN ADVENTURE Original by A. R. I., using Peter Fleming's title	A.R.I.	59
	FRENCHMAN'S CREEK Daphne du Maurier's novel, purchased by Paramount	RKO	57
	IMMIGRANT BOY Life of Bill Knudsen	A.R.I.	56
	PASSAGE FROM BORDEAUX Screen play by Oliver H. P. Garrett	RKO	56
	KEEPER OF THE FLAME Story by I. A. R. Wylie	RKO	55
	BIG FAMILY Bellamy Partridge's novel, purchased by Warners	RKO	55
	VALLEY OF THE SUN Novel by Clarence B. Kelland	RKO	51
Third Class	JOURNEY INTO FEAR Novel by Eric Ambler	RKO	49
	THE DEVIL & DANIEL WEBSTER	RKO	48
	NO MORE GAS Novel by Nordhoff & Hall	RKO	48
	LONA HENRY Novel by Polan Banks	RKO	46
	THE RED PONY Short Story by John Steinbeck	RKO	42
	CARMEN Opera by Bizet	RKO	42

Princeton, October 21, 1941

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT 113

NO MORE GAS

"No—I saw Laughton in the BEACHCOMBER and that was terrible", was the reaction of a 25 year old interne in New York City to NO MORE GAS.

The majority of theatergoers interviewed in our surveys showed no interest whatever in the Nordhoff and Hall story. When tested without cast, the story elicited a reaction which is summed up in these four comments:

"It just ain't anything."

"It's got no subject matter."

"There's not enough plot to that picture."

"Nothing to it—I like some meat to a picture."

The actual vote recorded for NO MORE GAS, when tested without cast, was 48 per cent—which places the story in the Third Class. Readers of the Institute's recent reports will recall that Third Class stories are those whose acceptance value is so low that even with a major marquee name they could not be expected to make successful A pictures; such stories must be regarded as a *liability* to their producers.

When tested with Laughton and Jon Hall, more than 70 per cent of those persons who voted for the picture gave a reason in terms of *cast*, as compared with an average of only 40 per cent for all A pictures. This fact provides additional proof that the story is weak.

Our polls indicate that there is one way in which you could perhaps salvage this picture. Audiences are hungry for laughs, and such votes as were registered for NO MORE GAS mostly came from theatergoers who thought the story might be funny. *The funnier you can make it, the better it will do.*

It must be remembered, however, that Laughton's following is essentially an upper class, upper age group following. (See Seventh Audit of Marquee Values). This particular segment of the market has a more exacting standard of humor than the nether segments who flock to Abbott & Costello or Bob Hope. It isn't going to be so easy to get laughs from Laughton fans.

Here you run into another difficulty. If we were called upon to cast a funny picture, Laughton is one of the last personalities we should advise you to select. Previous surveys conducted in connection with MR. PINKIE revealed that Laughton's name on the marquee does not suggest that a comedy is being screened; the majority of theatergoers think of him in terms of his more sinister roles—Tony Patucci, the Hunchback, Pengallon, Bly and Barrett. Those who associate him with his more amiable roles—such as Ruggles and the Beachcomber—are in a minority. Mr. Laughton may not like the fact that he has been typed as a bad man and a heavy, but the fact remains, and RKO producers should be fully aware of it before they decide to use Laughton in a comedy role.*

Princeton, October 23, 1941

*By the time NO MORE GAS reaches the screen it is possible that one theatergoer in five will have seen his performance in IT STARTED WITH EVE.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT 114

CHINA SKY

On May 8, 1941, the Institute drew attention to CHINA SKY, a novel by Pearl Buck which was then being serialized in COLLIER'S. It transpired that RKO had already considered this story, judging it "fairly good though not outstanding". However, further tests by the Institute indicated that the audience acceptance value of CHINA SKY was exceptionally strong, and early in September it was announced that your company had purchased the story.

To make quite sure that our original estimate was not exaggerated we have conducted a further series of tests, the results of which confirm that CHINA SKY belongs in the select band of stories which, given adequate publicity penetration, could make successful A pictures even without a major marquee name. Since March 1940 only seventeen stories have emerged in this First Class—seventeen out of the three hundred tested by the Institute. These seventeen leaders are:

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| 1. WILL ROGERS | 10. CHINA SKY |
| 2. WIDOW WORE A BLACK EYE | 11. CONNECTICUT YANKEE AT
KING ARTHUR'S COURT |
| 3. LOU GEHRIG | 12. YES, YES YVETTE |
| 4. FLIGHT SURGEON | 13. THE DESERT SONG |
| 5. ARMY SURGEON | 14. RICKENBACKER |
| 6. EAST FROM HALIFAX | 15. JOAN OF PARIS |
| 7. TELEVISION TOWN | 16. THE GREAT ICE |
| 8. THE PASSIONATE WITCH | 17. OUT OF THE NIGHT |
| 9. THE MAYO BROTHERS | |

CHINA SKY is one of those all too rare properties which is all things to all ticket-buyers. Females like its romance; males like its action; children like its airplanes; they all like hospitals and doctors. The story is equally strong with all income groups and in every size of community.

We find that the mention of Pearl Buck increases the picture's box-office expectancy by seven per cent, which is not surprising when you recall that in a nationwide survey conducted three years ago we found that she ranked among the ten most popular authors in the country.*

*The first ten were Zane Grey, Kathleen Norris, John Steinbeck, Lloyd Douglas, Mark Twain, Charles Dickens, Margaret Mitchell, Pearl Buck, Louis Bromfield and A. J. Cronin—in that order.

By way of experiment we have tested CHINA SKY with Paul Muni, Luise Rainer, and Ruth Warrick; and although Muni does not now rank among the first twenty stars in order of marquee value, our results indicate that with this cast a box-office expectancy of 125 per cent would not be too sanguine *provided your advertising department secured adequate publicity penetration.*

The reader may recall that in a series of polls conducted earlier this year we found that of all Muni's previous pictures the one most favorably remembered by the public was THE GOOD EARTH. We now find that teaming Muni with Rainer elicits a stream of comments along these lines: "*I saw THE GOOD EARTH and they played so good together.*" THE GOOD EARTH was among the fourteen highest grossers of 1937.

We suggest seeking both Muni and Rainer for this picture on the assumption that Rainer can now be hired at a very modest figure; Report LXXX on THE MARQUEE VALUE OF TEAMS demonstrated that it is seldom good business to use two major stars in one picture. In this case, however, there seems to be a special case for adding Rainer—to exploit the demand for another Buck-Muni-Rainer picture. Without Rainer the association might not be so obvious.

Princeton, October 23, 1941

49 MORE PERSONALITIES

Although the one hundred thirteen players covered by the Institute's Continuing Audit of Marquee Values were selected by RKO, a majority of them are under contract to other studios. For that reason the Institute has just measured the marquee value of forty-nine more personalities, most of whom are available to RKO.

Unfortunately the results of this survey demonstrate that there are few, if any, real ticket-sellers who are not already covered by the Continuing Audit.

We have combined the results of this survey with the results of the Seventh Audit, which enables us to rank all the one hundred sixty-two players concerned in order of their power-to-sell-tickets, from Spencer Tracy at the top down to Anna Lee at the bottom.

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Players in black type were not included in the Seventh Audit.

1	Tracy, Spencer	52.9	55	Lane, Priscilla	16.4	109	Scott, Randolph	6.9
2	Davis, Bette	50.0	56	Montgomery, Robert	16.2	109	Scott, Martha	6.9
3	Stewart, James	47.6	57	De Havilland, Olivia	16.0	111	Neagle, Anna	6.7
4	Gable, Clark	44.8	58	Brent, George	15.9	111	Ahern, Brian	6.7
5	Rooney, Mickey	44.4	58	Raft, George	15.9	113	Hall, Jon	6.6
6	Hope, Bob	38.7	60	Grable, Betty	15.7	113	Miranda, Carmen	6.6
7	Cooper, Gary	38.0	61	Kyser, Kay	15.5	113	Wyman, Jane	6.6
8	Grant, Cary	36.8	62	Sothern, Ann	14.9	116	Kelly, Nancy	6.5
9	Rogers, Ginger	34.9	63	Turner, Lana	14.0	117	Foster, Preston	6.2
10	Loy, Myrna	34.1	63	Henie, Sonja	14.0	118	Hayden, Stirling	6.1
10	Garland, Judy	34.1	65	Astaire, Fred	13.6	119	Swanson, Gloria	6.0
12	Flynn, Errol	30.8	66	Powell, Eleanor	13.5	119	Shirley, Anne	6.0
13	Cagney, James	30.7	67	Ayres, Lew	13.1	119	Donlevy, Brian	6.0
14	Durbin, Daanna	29.8	67	Goddard, Paulette	12.9	122	Fontaine, Joan	5.9
15	Crosby, Bing	28.4	69	Bennett, Joan	12.9	123	Albert, Eddie	5.8
16	Leigh, Vivien	27.6	69	Lynn, Jeffrey	12.9	124	Jean, Gloria	5.6
17	Dunne, Irene	27.5	71	Cooper, Jackie	12.7	125	Hussey, Ruth	5.5
18	Berry, Wallace	27.4	72	Welles, Orson	12.6	125	Wayne, John	5.5
19	Powell, William	26.8	73	Young, Robert	12.3	125	Preston, Robert	5.5
20	Power, Tyrone	26.6	74	Marshall, Herbert	12.2	128	Trevor, Claire	5.2
21	Raye, Alice	26.2	75	Powell, Dick	12.1	129	Hayward, Louis	5.1
22	Lamar, Hedy	25.2	76	Rainer, Luise	11.9	130	Marshall, Brenda	5.0
23	Muni, Paul	25.0	77	Garbo, Greta	11.6	131	Granville, Bonita	4.8
24	Colbert, Claudette	24.9	78	Blondell, Joan	11.4	132	O'Hara, Maureen	4.6
25	O'Brien, Pat	24.7	79	Morgan, Frank	11.3	132	Holden, William	4.6
26	Robinson, Edward G.	24.4	80	Fairbanks, Douglas, Jr.	10.8	134	Holt, Tim	4.5
27	Russell, Rosalind	24.3	80	Withers, Jane	10.8	135	Landis, Carole	4.3
27	Barrymore, Lionel	24.3	82	Bergman, Ingrid	10.7	136	O'Keefe, Dennis	4.2
29	Boyer, Charles	24.0	83	Arnold, Edward	10.6	137	Simms, Ginny	4.1
30	MacDonald, Jeanette	22.9	84	Ruehford, Ann	10.5	138	Ball, Lucille	3.8
31	Arthur, Jean	22.8	85	Morris, Wayne	10.4	138	Lee, Carolyn	3.8
32	Taylor, Robert	22.5	85	Morris, Wayne	10.4	140	Fitzgerald, Geraldine	3.7
33	Amesche, Don	22.3	87	Darnell, Linda	10.3	141	Joyce, Brenda	3.6
34	Stanwyck, Barbara	22.1	87	Burns, Bob	10.3	141	Joyce, Brenda	3.6
35	Shearer, Norma	21.9	89	Rathbone, Basil	10.2	143	Field, Betty	3.3
36	Crawford, Joan	21.2	90	Lupino, Ida	9.8	143	Masses, Ilona	3.3
36	Crawford, Joan	21.2	91	Bellamy, Ralph	9.6	145	Simmons, Simone	3.2
38	Fonda, Henry	21.0	92	McCrea, Joel	9.3	145	Tierney, Gene	3.2
39	Douglas, Melvyn	20.9	93	Romero, Cesar	9.2	147	Howard, John	2.7
40	Colman, Ronald	20.8	94	Milland, Ray	9.0	148	Carroll, John	2.5
41	MacMurray, Fred	20.6	94	Menjou, Adolphe	9.0	148	Mature, Victor	2.5
42	Benny, Jack	20.2	96	Martin, Tony	8.8	148	Ford, Glenn	2.5
43	Bogart, Humphrey	20.0	97	Sanders, George	8.4	151	Stack, Robert	2.3
43	Lamour, Dorothy	20.0	97	Garson, Greer	8.4	152	Hughes, Mary Beth	2.3
45	Carroll, Madeline	19.8	99	Dietrich, Marlene	8.2	152	Bolger, Ray	2.3
46	Young, Loretta	19.4	99	Nolan, Lloyd	8.2	154	Craig, James	2.2
46	Garfield, John	19.4	101	Meredith, Burgess	7.8	155	Coburn, Charles	1.9
48	Lombard, Carole	19.0	102	Bartholomew, Freddie	7.6	156	Bryan, Jane	1.8
49	Sullivan, Margaret	18.6	103	Murphy, George	7.5	156	Leslie, Joan	1.8
50	Sheridan, Ann	17.8	103	Martin, Mary	7.5	158	Gilmore, Virginia	1.2
51	March, Fredric	17.6	105	Hunter, Ian	7.3	159	Arnaz, Desi	1.1
51	Laughton, Charles	17.6	106	Payne, John	7.2	160	Ellison, James	1.0
53	Eddy, Nelson	17.3	107	Day, Laraine	7.1	160	O'Brien, Edmond	.8
54	Olivier, Laurence	17.0	107	Morgan, Dennis	7.1	162	Lee, Anna	.6

Princeton, October 28, 1941

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT 116

JOAN OF PARIS

Although the *story* of JOAN OF PARIS has a higher acceptance value than any story used at RKO since MY FAVORITE WIFE, the picture cannot be expected to do good A business—that is the conclusion to be drawn from the results of two surveys just completed by the Institute. And the explanation is that no member of the cast ranks amongst the first hundred ticket-selling marquee names.

When tested without cast the story of JOAN OF PARIS emerges in the First Class under the Institute's new classification. Such stories are defined as those which, given adequate publicity penetration, could make successful A pictures without *major* marquee names.

In this case however, the players are so obscure that, when the picture is tested with its cast, the ticket-buying public assumes that it must be a B.

We have been noticing an obstinate reluctance on the part of the public to accept pictures which are without marquee name. So accustomed have theatergoers become to the presence of a 'name' in every A picture, that they interpret the absence of any name as a sure indication that the picture is going to be a second feature, a B.

You plan a picture with one or more recognized marquee names, in the safe knowledge that these names will deliver a certain minimum of ticket-buyers at the box-office. But just try making that picture without any marquee name. You find that the omission damages the picture's box-office expectancy out of all proportion.

The so-called "star system" isn't going to be easy for RKO to break. In this case, further sales resistance arises from the fact that Michele Morgan and Paul Henreid are *foreigners*; our studies have demonstrated that foreign players start with two strikes on them. Actually, the biggest ticket-seller in the cast is Thomas Mitchell.

Scrutiny of the comments recorded by our interviewers in the field reveals this: the fact that the picture is about R.A.F. fliers will sell far more tickets than Michele Morgan or any of the other names. *The Institute therefore urges RKO either to change the title so as to include a reference to the R.A.F., or to give the R.A.F. star billing.*

Hundreds of comments could be quoted in support of this recommendation; they can all be summed up in this one from Iowa: "I never heard tell of any of those players—personally I don't go very strong for foreign actors and I don't care for foreign pictures. *But I like the R.A.F.*"

JOAN OF PARIS presents a mighty challenge to the RKO advertising and publicity department. Every ten points they can add to the picture's penetration will add seven per cent to its gross. And, if they will build their publicity around the R.A.F. rather than trying to pre-sell Miss Morgan, the picture's "want-to-see" vote might possibly be great enough to enable RKO to sell it successfully as an A.

Princeton, October 24, 1941

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT 117

SNOW GOOSE

Paul Gallico's short story, as it appeared in the SATURDAY EVENING POST just one year ago, is too grim and morbid to enjoy high acceptance value with motion picture audiences at this time. Such is the conclusion to be drawn from the results of a nationwide survey just completed by the Institute.

The story received a vote of 51 per cent, which places it on the borderline between Second and Third Class.

It is the excitement of the Dunkirk episode which saves SNOW GOOSE from complete failure to interest the theatergoing public. The more you build up this aspect of the story, the greater will be its acceptance.

We find that the deformed hero is interesting to some persons, but to far more the idea of a hunchback coveting a young maiden is highly repugnant. We received innumerable comments illustrating this repugnance, of which the following are typical:

"I don't like it about this deformed guy falling for a young girl."—24-year-old stenographer in office of silk mill in Lowell, Massachusetts.

"Gee! Who wants to see a cripple?"—19-year-old daughter of a surveyor in Lincoln, Nebraska.

"I don't like having pitiful characters for heroes."—woman high school teacher in Danbury, Connecticut.

"The hunchback would keep me from seeing this."—23-year-old wife of an electrician in Birmingham, Alabama.

"I'd rather see the lover something other than a hunchback."
—32-year-old woman manager of millinery store in Chillicothe, Ohio.

This factor accounts for the substantially below-average appeal SNOW GOOSE has for the female portion of the ticket-buying public. Perhaps some less repulsive defect, such as infantile paralysis or blindness, could be substituted.

With males the story is average—thanks to Dunkirk.

THE TITLE

"What kind of a title is that?"—asked a 26-year-old bookkeeper in a dress house in New York City. The title SNOW GOOSE may have some subtle significance for those who are already acquainted with the story, but our findings indicate that it does not possess much pulling power so far as motion picture audiences are concerned. Few people are interested in seeing a picture about a goose—outside of a Disney cartoon.

* * * * *

Our general conclusion is that SNOW GOOSE will have to be considerably changed if it is to appeal to the ordinary theatergoer. *First*, the Dunkirk episode should be enlarged. *Second*, the hero's deformity should be changed. *Third*, a new title should be given to the story.

If all these changes were made, the story's audience acceptance value would certainly be increased. Whether it would then bear sufficient resemblance to Paul Gallico's story to justify the purchase price is a problem upon which we are not qualified to pass judgment.

Princeton, November 10, 1941

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT 117

AUDIENCE ACCEPTANCE OF WAR SUBJECTS

In June 1940 the Institute advised RKO that public opinion in relation to the war was in such a fluid condition that it would be unsafe to predict audience reactions to war subjects as far as six months ahead.

In a series of nationwide surveys conducted during the last three weeks we have repeated three questions on this subject, which were asked for the first time during 1940. Inspection of the results indicates that there has been remarkably little change in the audience acceptance value of war subjects during the last year and a half.

- (1) Suppose two pictures were showing tonight: one with a background of the current war, and one with a background of the Civil War. Which would you be most likely to see?

	<i>May 1940</i>	<i>Today</i>
	%	%
Civil War	38	43
Current War	62	57

- (2) Would you like to see *more* movies based on the present war in Europe?

Again we find very little change:

	<i>June 1940</i>	<i>Today</i>
	%	%
YES	32	34
NO	68	66

Readers are cautioned not to interpret the replies to this question as proof that audiences don't want war stories. No such conclusion is justified. With SERGEANT YORK and A YANK IN THE R.A.F. currently excelling the box-office success of THE FIGHTING 69TH it would obviously be absurd to contend that audiences don't want war stories.

(3) Suppose these four movies were showing tonight. Which one would you be most likely to see?*

- A movie with a background of the Revolutionary War
- A movie with a background of the Civil War
- A movie with a background of World War I
- A movie with a background of World War II

Here again the results show surprisingly little change.

	June 1940	Today
	%	%
Revolution	16	16
Civil War	21	17
World War I	14	17
World War II	49	50

Here again the reader is cautioned against interpreting too literally the replies to any such *direct* question, except in so far as they indicate a trend. After all, you have seen a picture about the Civil War break all records in the recent past, just as you have seen two pictures about World War I pile up large grosses.

The Institute believes that the success of *THE FIGHTING 69TH, SERGEANT YORK* and *A YANK IN THE R.A.F.* is due, in some measure, to the fact that these stories *present Americans with the unaccustomed opportunity to project themselves into war.* War pictures in which the chief characters are *foreigners* afford no such opportunities for self-identification.

The reader will remember that six months ago, in measuring audience interest in revivals of one hundred old box-office hits, *four out of the first ten were pictures about the last war.* These four pictures were: *ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT*, *HELL'S ANGELS*, *FAREWELL TO ARMS* and *WHAT PRICE GLORY.*

It is interesting to find that the groups most anxious to see pictures about the current war are those who are most likely to do the fighting—men between the ages of eighteen and thirty. It is their mothers, wives and sisters who are least interested.

This finding parallels our findings in the field of magazine fiction. In the past we have found that war itself, as the subject of a story, is inher-

*The order in which these four subjects were presented was shuffled four ways during the course of the survey in order to iron out any bias due to position on the list.

ently interesting to male readers. It is not, of course, a subject of basic appeal to women, but women will accept a story in which war is only the *background*. A case in point is ARMY SURGEON—a love story with a war background, which is equally popular with men and with women.

Fiction dependent upon interest in war itself is not being read by women readers, but is being read by a very healthy proportion of men. *Fiction in which war is only the background is still popular with women.*

This is another problem in which over-simplified generalization is bound to lead to a faulty conclusion. There is no *class* of fiction, and no *class* of motion picture, which is either infallibly successful or infallibly unsuccessful. It always depends on the particular story. You cannot say either that the public *wants* war subjects or doesn't want them. It all depends on the individual story.

Princeton, October 30, 1941

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT 118

GILDED PHEASANT

In a nationwide survey just completed the Institute has measured the audience acceptance value of Stephen Morehouse Avery's short story GILDED PHEASANT. The theme of this story, as synopsisized by RKO, is as follows:

An American who resents his wife, who thinks that she purposely remains a stranger to him, takes her traveling. In Mexico, where she lived before, they go to an out-of-the-way cafe to dine. Here the husband hears the story of the wife's romance with a Mexican mural painter who sits at the next table; tells the story to a friend. The husband knows now that this was the romance of her life; that she wed him out of pity. He leaves. The painter and the wife are together . . .

Before going any further the reader may like to make his own estimate as to the acceptance value of this story.

* * * * *

The vote for GILDED PHEASANT was 33 per cent, which places it low in the Third Class. Stories which emerge in this class have been defined as "those whose acceptance value is so small that even with a major marquee name they could not be expected to make successful A pictures".

Ordinarily we find that a story which registers a weak over-all vote at least shows strength with some special segment of the public. GILDED PHEASANT is a notable exception—it is far below average with both sexes, with all age groups, with all economic classes and with people in every size of community.

It is seldom that a triangle subject emerges high with male theatergoers, so it is no surprise to find that GILDED PHEASANT is unpopular with men. In this case, however, the male vote is so exceptionally low that some special explanation must be sought. Inspection of the comments recorded by our interviewers shows that the normal male does not feel much sympathy either for the Mexican muralist or for the American cuckold.

The theme of an American husband losing his wife to a Mexican painter is not even popular with female ticket-buyers.

This is not the first time the Institute has noticed an unfavorable reaction to stories which revolve around a woman's infidelity towards her husband. Even in the case of *MY LIFE WITH CAROLINE* we received many adverse comments on the wife's lack of devotion.

With the utmost diffidence we offer the conclusion that unhappy marriage is not a fruitful source of popular story material. Ordinary entertainment-seekers appear to find it highly unpalatable: "*There's too much two-timing going on in the world.*" "*I don't like trouble at home.*"

What little interest is shown in *GILDED PHEASANT* is due almost entirely to the appeal of Mexico and the colorful fiesta as a background. But remember this: if you, the reader, have been fortunate enough to visit Mexico, you are almost bound to harbor a special interest in stories about that country; the vast majority of theatergoers do not share this special interest because they have never enjoyed an opportunity to visit Mexico.

As for the *title*, for every favorable comment we received two unfavorable comments.

Princeton, November 3, 1941

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT 119

SILVER SPOON

In a report dated August 14 the Institute drew attention to *SILVER SPOON*, a novel by Clarence Buddington Kelland. On October 7 it was announced that your company had purchased this story.

The theme of this property, with its hero taking the jump from riches to rags in his stride, strikes a sympathetic chord with rich and poor alike.

The student of our research findings might suppose that *SILVER SPOON*, being a story about a man, would interest male theatergoers more than female. Actually it seems to interest both sexes about equally; females appear to identify themselves rather easily with Peggy Fogarty, the red-head who helps the playboy face the future.

The audience acceptance value of this story shows marked differences by size of community. It is considerably stronger in towns under 100,000 than in the larger cities. For that reason it would perhaps be wise not to open the picture in the big cities until its popularity has been established in such situations as Lowell, Kansas City (Kansas) or Sioux City—unless, of course, you can offset this weakness by obtaining a personality whose power-to-sell tickets is exceptionally strong in big cities. (This is true of Cary Grant, Joel McCrea, Brian Aherne and Randolph Scott—among others.)

What is significant about the comments we obtained on *SILVER SPOON* is that the greater part of them are not votes for a *type* of picture (as is often the case), but rather an express desire to see the particular character featured in the story, Ogden Pieter. The following comments are typical:

"That guy's got the guts it takes these days."

"I like a guy with a lot of go-get-it pluck."

"I like the fellow's spunk."

"I think a guy that would go from riches to truck-driving would be worth seeing."

On evidence it would seem if your company could obtain a reasonably strong player for the featured role, you might have a hit on your hands.

In our tests SILVER SPOON received a vote of 58 per cent, which places it high in the Second Class. Stories which fall into this class have been defined as those which, given a marquee name and high publicity penetration, *could* make successful A pictures. It is more than doubtful whether any Second Class story can ever be successful without a real marquee name. In other words—SILVER SPOON is not a strong enough story for one of those medium budget star-less pictures in which your company has come to specialize.

Princeton, November 3, 1941

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT 120

BRAZILIAN ADVENTURE

Under the terms of our agreement with your company the Institute contracted to furnish new story suggestions after they had been tested for acceptance value. Since that time we have reported favorably on many such stories, but not one has yet been put in production by your company. Meanwhile innumerable un-tested stories have been purchased.

In this report we draw attention to yet another theme which interests the ticket-buying public. It is the story of an air pilot, forced down in the jungle of Brazil. He comes across a community of Americans who have been isolated there for thirty years, hundreds of miles from 'civilization'. Falling in love with one of the girls, he takes her back with him to the United States, but comes to realize that life has more to offer with the lost community. Together they renounce the world and return to the jungle. [The title BRAZILIAN ADVENTURE was borrowed from Peter Fleming's book describing his search for Colonel Fawcett.]

This story, which obviously has much in common with LOST HORIZON, and perhaps a little in common with Hudson's GREEN MANSIONS, received a vote of 60 per cent, thus qualifying for inclusion in the First Class. Of three hundred stories tested by the Institute during the last year and a half, only fifteen have received more votes than BRAZILIAN ADVENTURE.

While possessing better than average appeal to women, BRAZILIAN ADVENTURE is outstandingly strong with male theatergoers—who account for almost exactly *half* the box-office dollar. The story is equally attractive to all ages, to all income levels and to all sizes of community.

Here are the opinions of two such different people as a prosperous Philadelphia lawyer and a sixteen year old girl in Arkansas: "*A thrilling adventure is always welcome*", and (the girl) "*it's so unusual and has so much action*".

The strength of this picture rests primarily on its appeal to lovers of adventure. We have found that there is almost as great a market for adventure pictures as for funny pictures, provided the adventure exhibits the least grain of originality. Too many properties recently tested for RKO have been condemned by the public as *ordinary, dull, trite, the same old baloney* etc. It is encouraging to come upon a story which elicits a stream of comments to the effect that it is *different*.

We have reason to believe that, other things being equal, stories which, like *BRAZILIAN ADVENTURE*, come out of cycle, start with an advantage.

This Institute has never fully understood what people mean when they talk of *escapist* pictures. Indeed, we have always suspected that 'escapist' is one of those convenient words which explains nothing because it means nothing.

So far as our personal (and therefore inconclusive) experience is concerned, all good pictures can be described as 'escapist' in that they succeed in making us forget our problems for a couple of hours. Even *GRAPES OF WRATH* was 'escapist' by this definition. But we understand that this meretricious word does possess, for some people, a narrower and more specific connotation: apparently it can apply with special relevance to stories which picture a happier world than that in which the unfortunate theatergoer happens to be situated. By this definition you could reasonably describe *BRAZILIAN ADVENTURE* as 'escapist'.

Whether or not this peculiar quality constitutes a *plus*, we do not know for certain. Audiences probably do have a tendency to enjoy the somewhat inspirational quality of the Shangri-la motif, but we cannot prove that this is so—the average ticket buyer is too inarticulate to put such feeling into words for the benefit of a Gallup interviewer.

The important fact is that, whatever the reasons, *BRAZILIAN ADVENTURE* has emerged with flying colors from the ordeal of the poll, and deserves the earnest consideration of RKO. The reader is free to make up his own mind as to the reasons for its exceptional audience appeal, based upon his own experience and the data set forth above.

NOTE: Our synopsis of *BRAZILIAN ADVENTURE* referred to the Brazilian 'jungle.' It can now be stated, as the result of cumulative experience with Conrad's *HEART OF DARKNESS* and other stories, that this word 'jungle' has emerged in our comment analysis as one of those rare words which has the power to alienate a significant number of theatergoers. ('Fantasy' is another keep-away word which we have learned to avoid.) Had this word been omitted from our synopsis, the vote for *BRAZILIAN ADVENTURE* would have been slightly higher.

Princeton, November 3, 1941

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT 121

A TITLE FOR NO MORE GAS

The Institute has just finished testing the relative pulling power of nine titles submitted by your company for the Nordhoff & Hall picture.

TOMORROW NEVER COMES received almost twice as many votes as its nearest competitor. It is one of those rare titles which means all things to all people. Except comedy. Nobody seems to think that TOMORROW NEVER COMES would be a comedy. We therefore conclude that it is an excellent title, but not for this picture.

Next in order of voting come two of the Tahiti titles, but here again the implication is misleading. To most theatergoers Tahiti seems to mean a *sarong* type of picture—Dorothy Lamour, etc. We have found that such pictures appeal most strongly to the poor and to the young, whereas Laughton and the Nordhoff-Hall story appeal to the rich and to the old. *Ergo*, if your title contains any reference to Tahiti, it will alienate the picture's best friends.

We understand that Universal have a picture coming up titled SOUTH OF TAHITI—with Brian Donlevy and Andy Devine.

The title TROUBLE IN TAHITI suffers from another handicap: many persons opine that it would be about international intrigue in the Pacific.

In fourth place comes OUT OF GAS—which incidentally is very close to the author's original title. Here there are no misleading connotations. Most theatergoers think the picture would be some sort of comedy, and a valuable minority remember reading the story in the Saturday Evening Post. (c.f. THE DEVIL AND DANIEL WEBSTER, Benet's original title, which consistently beat all the other titles proposed, including the one finally selected.)

We conclude that, since the first three titles must be disqualified on the ground that they are dangerously misleading, OUT OF GAS is the logical heir.

Here are the actual figures, expressed in terms of an index, on the basis of TOMORROW NEVER COMES = 100.

TOMORROW NEVER COMES	100
HOLIDAY IN TAHITI	54
TROUBLE IN TAHITI	51
OUT OF GAS	49
THE MAN FROM TAHITI	38
SPENDTHRIFT	33
THE INCREDIBLE TUTTLES	27
TUTTLES OF TAHITI	23
THE MORTGAGE LIFTER	13

Note: Our test was organized in such a way as to obviate any possibility of vote-splitting between closely similar titles.

Princeton, November 3, 1941

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT 122

PUBLICITY PENETRATION

The Institute has just completed an analysis of the sixty most recent Indices of Publicity Penetration. This analysis reveals the following important facts:

- (1) The average 'want-to-see' vote for RKO pictures is above the industry average with persons over thirty years, but below the industry average with the younger age groups.*

WANT-TO-SEE BY AGE GROUPS

	12-17	18-30	31-up	Total
	%	%	%	%
All Pictures	73.4	67.8	65.6	68.5
RKO Pictures	67.6	65.7	66.6	66.3
Difference	-5.8	-2.1	+1.0	-2.2

Although the want-to-see vote for RKO pictures is greatest in the youngest age group, it is in this group that RKO pictures have their *relatively weakest* appeal.

- (2) The average want-to-see vote for RKO pictures is above the industry average in the 'prosperous' income group, but below average in the lower income groups.†

WANT-TO-SEE BY INCOME GROUPS

	Prosperous	Upper Middle	Lower Middle	Poor	Total
	%	%	%	%	%
All Pictures	66.7	66.3	70.0	70.9	68.5
RKO Pictures	67.1	64.1	68.0	66.7	66.3
Difference	+ .4	-2.2	-2.0	-4.2	-2.2

*Only 35 per cent of all tickets are purchased by persons over thirty.

†Only 12 per cent of all tickets are purchased by persons in the 'prosperous' income group.

(3) The average want-to-see vote of RKO pictures is almost up to the industry average in cities with a population in excess of 500,000, but below average elsewhere.

WANT-TO-SEE BY SIZE OF CITY

	Under 10,000 %	10-100,000 %	100-500,000 %	Over 500,000 %	Total %
All Pictures	70.5	70.6	67.8	67.6	68.5
RKO Pictures	67.3	67.2	64.8	66.6	66.3
Difference	-3.2	-3.4	-3.0	-1.0	-2.2

(4) The average publicity penetration of RKO pictures is below the industry average in all age groups, and is relatively weakest in the younger age groups.

PUBLICITY PENETRATION BY AGE GROUPS

	12-17 %	18-30 %	31-up %	Total %
All Pictures	31.7	32.7	27.3	31.1
RKO Pictures	25.0	26.9	23.4	25.6
Difference	-6.7	-5.8	-3.9	-5.5

(5) The average publicity penetration of RKO pictures is below the industry average in all income groups, and is relatively weakest in the poorer income groups.

PUBLICITY PENETRATION BY INCOME GROUPS

	Prosperous %	Upper Middle %	Lower Middle %	Poor %	Total %
All Pictures	35.8	34.2	30.6	26.1	31.1
RKO Pictures	31.2	28.5	24.7	20.5	25.6
Difference	-4.6	-5.7	-5.9	-5.6	-5.5

As might be expected, the average penetration for all pictures is definitely correlated with income—the higher the income, the greater the penetration. The penetration is relatively much higher with the prosperous and upper middle economic groups.

It is interesting that the penetration of RKO pictures, as compared to that of pictures of other studios, is relatively more successful within the prosperous group and *least* successful with the economic segments in which the greatest number of ticket-buyers are found.

(6) The Institute has often pointed out that publicity and advertising campaigns begin too late. Analysis of the sixty most recent Indices yield the following averages:

PUBLICITY PENETRATION BY WEEKS							
	BEFORE RELEASE				AFTER RELEASE		
	<i>Three</i> %	<i>Two</i> %	<i>One</i> %	<i>0</i> %	<i>One</i> %	<i>Two</i> %	<i>Three</i> %
All Pictures	16.6	20.8	24.3	30.1	37.1	42.4	46.4
RKO Pictures	12.9	15.2	16.8	24.5	32.4	36.7	40.4
Difference	-3.7	-5.6	-7.5	-5.6	-4.7	-5.7	-6.0

If the average publicity penetration of RKO pictures is somewhat below the industry average, it must be remembered that those responsible for RKO advertising and publicity operate under certain handicaps. For example, it is easier for MGM to secure high penetrations for their pictures, which generally boast big marquee names, than it is for RKO to secure high penetrations for *their* pictures, which often lack such publicity naturals. Again, it is difficult for RKO to achieve high penetrations when titles are changed a few weeks prior to release (e. g. *SUSPICION* and *ALL THAT MONEY CAN BUY*). Lastly, it is unfair to compare the penetration of a campaign which has cost \$50,000 with the penetration of a campaign which has cost \$100,000.

Princeton, November 19, 1941

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT 123

PICKWICK PAPERS

BACKGROUND

On October 8 RKO sent the following instructions to the INSTITUTE:

"We would like to know theatergoers' reactions to PICKWICK PAPERS of Charles Dickens, as a motion picture . . . You might try to find the number of people who have heard of this work, the number of people who have read the novel, and the number of people who would like to see a picture made from the novel.

"With regard to the story itself, as we have it in the synopsis, it might be well to make several tests—first with the title PICKWICK PAPERS, and secondly with various other titles, at the same time attempting to disguise the story. By doing this perhaps we shall be able to discover the audience appeal of the story itself; it might even enable us to determine just what influence the title 'PICKWICK PAPERS' and the name Dickens might have on the public's acceptance of the picture.

"These tests should be made without a cast. However, in order to make the report complete, several tests might be made with any cast, or even with an ideal cast . . . In the instance of tests with casts, I suggest that you keep in mind one important limitation—the players must be available to RKO. In addition to the above tests, perhaps you could also test the title against any others that you may have in mind."

Three weeks later we issued a brief interim report. Today we have completed our studies on this property; no less than *six* different polls have been conducted.

AUDIENCE ACCEPTANCE VALUE OF STORY

<i>Range</i>	<i>Average for All Stories Tested</i>	<i>Plus or Minus Compared with Average</i>
<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	
51 to 54	50	+2% to +8%

On the basis of these results PICKWICK PAPERS falls in the Second Class.

The first column in the above table, *range* in audience acceptance value, reflects the influence of changes in synopsis. In testing this story we tried no less than five different synopses, each one emphasizing different

elements. One synopsis omitted any mention of the 'Old English' background. Another emphasized the *variety* of incident. Another emphasized the *comic* side of MR. PICKWICK. And so on. In one test we actually went so far as to use a different title.

The marked similarity in the results obtained from these widely different treatments indicates that the audience acceptance value of PICKWICK PAPERS depends primarily on the basic story idea, and is not conditioned by a reaction to any particular minor element.

The synopsis which secured the highest vote (54 per cent) was the one which most emphasized the comic aspects of the story. Particularly appreciated was the night in a ladies' seminary.

ANALYSIS BY AUDIENCE GROUPS

Age

Slightly stronger with theatergoers under 18 than with older age groups.

Sex

Stronger with males than with females.

Economic

Stronger with the prosperous minority.

Frequency

Stronger with irregular theatergoers than with habituais.

When tested without either the title PICKWICK PAPERS or the name Charles Dickens, the story gains strength with males, with the younger age groups, with the lower income groups and with small-town theatergoers. On the other hand it loses *almost* equivalent support with females, with the higher educational groups, and with the elderly.

The following comments show how the two opposite attitudes towards the classics tend to cancel out.

FAVORABLE

"I'd love to see it because it's a classic."—35-year-old wife of accountant in Birmingham, Alabama.

"Anything Dickens writes is good."—28-year-old wife of dentist in Connellsville, Pennsylvania.

"Yes, it's a masterpiece." — a high school student in Philadelphia.

"I have read this. It's by a famous author."—24-year-old engineering contractor in New York City.

UNFAVORABLE

"I had to read the book and I didn't like it."—20-year-old aviation student in Newark.

"Sounds too literary for me."—20-year-old carnival-barker.

"Too deep, this old England stuff."—19-year-old gas attendant in Pasco, Washington.

"No! It sounds stuffy. I've had plenty in school."—15-year-old daughter of paint store owner.

"Sounds too educational."—14-year-old son of garage proprietor in New York City.

On the whole we conclude that the identification of this story as a classic (by retaining the title *PICKWICK PAPERS* and by conspicuously billing Charles Dickens) would *help* the picture at the box-office rather more than it would *hurt* it. This conclusion is supported by the INSTITUTE's "Continuing Analysis of Box-Office", which shows that during the last three years pictures made from classics have rated 13.6 per cent above average after discounting marquee values.

SUPPLEMENTARY DATA

Forty-four per cent of all ticket-buyers have heard of *PICKWICK PAPERS*, 25 per cent can name the author, and 24 per cent have read all or part of the book. These figures are not high for a classic, as the following comparison reveals:

	<i>Heard of</i>	<i>Can Name Author</i>	<i>Read</i>
	%	%	%
DAVID COPPERFIELD	82	39	52
IVANHOE	77	30	52
SILAS MARNER	61	22	47
PICKWICK PAPERS	44	25	24
LORNA DOONE	43	4	19

There are probably two dominant factors governing the penetration of these classics: (A) whether or not they have been made into motion pictures—*PICKWICK PAPERS* has not been made as a picture in recent years; and (B) whether or not they are required reading in schools—*PICKWICK PAPERS* is not required reading in schools.

These results indicate that, if RKO is interested in purchasing *classics* for production at this time, IVANHOE, and COPPERFIELD would be more promising investments. In fact it is remarkable that IVANHOE which has not had COPPERFIELD's advantage of being exposed to the public as a motion-picture, should emerge as high as it does.

Nevertheless, the fact that 24 per cent of all theatergoers have read PICKWICK PAPERS provides at least some foundation for a publicity campaign.

NOTES ON CASTING

This picture presents a casting problem in that the central character is middle-aged to elderly, and there are not many strong marquee names in that group. The natural choice for RKO is Charles Laughton, but we find that his name adds little to the acceptance value of the picture. The majority of theatergoers still cannot see Laughton in an amiable comedy role, although "IT STARTED WITH EVE" is beginning to make some converts.*

We have not tested any other cast because we know of no other suitable player available to RKO. Theatergoers suggested many names for the part of Pickwick, including Frank Morgan, Jack Benny, Bob Hope, Lionel Barrymore, Eric Blore, W. C. Fields (*"I would see it only if W. C. Fields were in it—if it were comic—but they wouldn't do it that way."*).

SUMMARY AND APPRAISAL

PICKWICK PAPERS falls into the Second Class of story property. Its audience acceptance value is certainly not high enough to indicate a sure hit, but neither is it low enough to guarantee a box-office disaster. It is run-of-mill. Whether or not it could hold its own as an A picture depends upon whether RKO can obtain a ticket-selling marquee name. It must be said, however, that the story definitely is not strong enough to justify a high purchase price or a high production budget.

We urgently recommend testing the casts proposed before making any commitment.

Princeton, December 9, 1941

*We estimate that barely one theatergoer in five has yet seen the Durbin-Laughton picture.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT 124

LAWYER FOR THE DEFENSE

Although "this is not the type of subject your company wishes to present," it may interest the reader to know that CLARENCE DARROW FOR THE DEFENSE emerged high even when tested with such a lesser marquee name as Thomas Mitchell.

CLARENCE DARROW FOR THE DEFENSE is the name of Irving Stone's recently published book about the criminal lawyer who fought capital punishment and defended murderers without fee. It has emerged from our tests with a remarkably broad vote. The story is far above average with every segment of the ticket-buying public.

It appeals to different classes for entirely different reasons. First, as a crime picture it draws the almost unanimous interest of theatergoers under twenty and of persons in the lower income groups. Listen to the naive comments of three typical murder-gangster-mystery enthusiasts, as recorded verbatim by our interviewers in the field:

"I like those kind about this guy who risks his life for criminals—it's exciting."

"I like pictures of criminals and stuff."

"It's kinda criminalish."

Second, LAWYER FOR THE DEFENSE draws a large vote on the basis of specific interest in Clarence Darrow the man, and the ideas he represents. Said a college instructor in Brooklyn, "Darrow was the most spectacular lawyer—I'd like to see anything about Clarence Darrow." Such interest accounts in large measure for the high vote from the upper income groups.

Princeton, November 24, 1941

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT 125

THE WITCH OF WALL STREET

Hetty Green died in 1916. Twenty-one years later Boyden Sparkes and Samuel Taylor Moore published their account of her life, under the title *THE WITCH OF WALL STREET*.

The Institute finds that this story has above-average interest for females and average interest for males. It receives an over-all vote of 56 per cent, thus qualifying for inclusion in the Second Class.

Theatergoers, particularly females, like the idea of a woman outsmarting the men on Wall Street. The story strikes many respondents as an interesting and *unusual* variation on the battle of the sexes.

As much as any story we have tested, *THE WITCH OF WALL STREET* arouses *curiosity*. Whether or not they already know anything about the Hetty Green legend, theatergoers seem to be intrigued by the idea of a fabulously rich and successful woman financier.

THE WITCH OF WALL STREET appeals almost equally to all income groups. For the rich the story has a certain degree of *proximity*—"My family has been in Wall Street for years—so the subject interests me," said an estate agent in Manhattan. For the poor and for the hinterlanders there seems to be something admirable about anyone who can get the better of Wall Street—Hetty is their champion.

In a second survey we tested this story with Katharine Hepburn, who now ranks 56th in the Continuing Audit of Marquee Values and who is reported available. The result was encouraging.

Princeton, November 24, 1941

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT 126

ATTACK ALARM

In a nationwide test conducted during the latter part of October the Institute exposed **ATTACK ALARM**, Saturday Evening Post serial by Hammond Innes, to a representative cross-section of the theatergoing public. It emerged with a vote of 60 per cent, which places it just inside the First Class.

An unusual feature of our results was that every single respondent who has caught the story in the Saturday Evening Post voted for it as a picture. Said a New York lawyer: "*I read the story and I know it from A to Z. I couldn't wait until the next issue of the Saturday Evening Post came out. Boy, will I see it!*" Likewise a twenty-year-old pastry-baker: "*I read the story. It's very, very good.*"

ATTACK ALARM is strongest with the younger age groups and the poorer income levels. Incidentally it is with these segments of the ticket-buying public that RKO pictures have been conspicuously below the industry average during the last two years. (See REPORT 122)

The box-office performance of four recent pictures provides additional evidence as to the present audience acceptance of stories of this type: **A YANK IN THE R.A.F.**, **DIVE BOMBER**, **SERGEANT YORK**, and **I WANTED WINGS**.

Princeton, November 24, 1941

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT 127

ARMS AND THE MAN

BACKGROUND

On September 15 it was announced in Hollywood that Gabriel Pascal would produce *ARMS AND THE MAN* for RKO release. Two weeks later the INSTITUTE received instructions to determine the audience acceptance value of this story.

Since the commitment had already been made there was not the usual urgency about determining audience acceptance and we were therefore able to subject the property to a long series of exhaustive tests.

Before reporting the results of these tests we must emphasize that they were confined to Shaw's original play. The screenplay by Donald Ogden Stewart has not been made available.

AUDIENCE ACCEPTANCE VALUE OF STORY

<i>Range</i> %	<i>Average for All</i> <i>Stories Tested</i> %	<i>Plus or Minus</i> <i>Compared with average</i>
41 to 63	50	-18% to +26%

The first column of the above table—*range* in audience acceptance value—reflects the influence of widely varying treatments. In testing this property we have tried no less than four different synopses, each one emphasizing different elements. One synopsis was a literal summary of the play, complete in its period setting. Another omitted any mention of the Bulgarian-Serbian background. A third omitted any mention of Bernard Shaw.

The treatment which secured the highest vote (63 per cent) was one which emphasized the satire—kidding phony military heroes, etc. This particular synopsis omitted any reference to the period or the Ruritanian setting. It emerged in the rare First Class.

[It must be emphasized that our tests were conducted before the Japanese attack on Hawaii. Whether reactions to frivolous handling of military heroics will change now that the United States is at war is a problem upon which we have no information at this time.]

ANALYSIS BY AUDIENCE GROUPS

Age

The most successful treatment is equally strong with all age groups.

Sex

The most successful treatment is slightly stronger with females than with males.

Economic

Stronger with prosperous than with lower income groups.

Frequency

Stronger with infrequent than with habitual theatergoers.

FAVORABLE COMMENTS

"I like the laughs and jokes and humor."—17-year-old son of a liquor store proprietor in Boston.

"It is the kidding of the military heroes I like."—41-year-old housewife in San Francisco.

"I'd like to see the Major get it in the neck—I don't like pompous people."—16-year-old student in electrical engineering in Philadelphia.

"I like the comedy parts, but the less I see about the military the better."—18-year-old pile driver in Cleveland, Ohio.

"I imagine it's fun! Hiding a fellow in her room!"—17-year-old daughter of factory mechanic in New York City.

"The story is written by a great humorist."—22-year-old cutter in upholstering shop in New York City.

"This should be amusing. I read the play and I think it's good material for a movie."—30-year-old wife of draftsman in Chicago.

"It's kind of a war picture and I like them."—20-year-old day laborer in rural Iowa.

"I like army pictures."—16-year-old son of foreman of soil conservation service in Russellville, Arkansas.

UNFAVORABLE COMMENTS

"Ridiculous—duels and Bulgarian Major's daughters!"—30-year-old section manager of department store in Brooklyn.

"I'm not interested in the Bulgarian-Serbian War."—16-year-old daughter of commission agent in New York City.

"I care nothing about war in olden times—I'd rather see something more modern."—19-year-old farmer in rural Pennsylvania.

"Just because I ought to see Shaw—the story doesn't particularly appeal to me."—40-year-old dentist in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania.

"I don't like duels. They are kinda stupid. They don't have them in America. I don't enjoy things I don't experience in life."—32-year-old wife of real estate broker in Birmingham, Alabama.

NOTES ON CASTING

REPORT LXXX established the fact that two major stars can almost always sell more tickets when appearing separately in two pictures than when appearing together in the same picture. There is so much overlapping between the following of any two major marquee names that the law of diminishing returns begins to operate immediately the second one is added.

In this case, Cary Grant's following includes no less than 72 per cent of Ginger Rogers' following.

When the straight Bulgarian-Serbian-melodrama synopsis was used, many of Ginger Rogers' fans objected: *"I like Ginger, but I wouldn't want to see her in that kind of picture."* Only her diehard supporters voted YES for this version—*"I like Ginger Rogers in anything and I mean anything."*

Similar reactions were forthcoming in the case of Cary Grant. Ticket-buyers again said that they preferred to see Grant as a *comedian*.

But when the strongest synopsis (humorous satire) was tested with Rogers and Grant the results were very favorable.

SUMMARY AND APPRAISAL

- 1) The INSTITUTE's tests were finished before the outbreak of war. Whether audience reactions to this story will now undergo any considerable change is a problem upon which we have no information up to this time.
- 2) The story has high acceptance value when it is treated lightly, humorously and satirically, without emphasis on the period setting.
- 3) The story is below average in acceptance when it is treated as a melodrama in a period setting.
- 4) There is some waste involved in using Cary Grant in the same picture as Ginger Rogers.

Princeton, December 10, 1941

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT 128

POWDER TOWN

BACKGROUND

On April 8 it was announced that RKO had assigned Vicki Baum's *POWDER TOWN* to Cliff Reid for production. On November 14—four days before shooting began—the Institute received instructions to determine the audience acceptance value of this story without reference to cast.

Our tests were completed before the outbreak of war, and were confined to the story department's outline of Vicki Baum's original—the screenplay was not made available.

AUDIENCE ACCEPTANCE VALUE

<i>Range</i>	<i>Average for All Stories Tested</i>	<i>Plus or Minus Compared with Average</i>
%	%	
55 to 64	50	+10% to +28%

The first column—*range* in audience acceptance value—reflects the influence of changes in treatment on audience reaction. In testing *POWDER TOWN* the Institute carried out two nationwide surveys, using two different synopses. The first approached the story from the viewpoint of the town and the girl; it scored 55 per cent. The second approached the story from the viewpoint of the FBI agent; it scored 64 per cent, thus qualifying as a "First Class" story.

ANALYSIS BY AUDIENCE GROUPS

Age

Above average with all age groups, but strongest with theatergoers under eighteen.

Sex

Stronger with males, but above average with females.

Income

Strongest with persons in the low income groups.

Size of Community

Considerably stronger in small towns than in large cities.

The average audience acceptance value of RKO pictures during the last two years has been above the industry average with the highest income-group and the older age-groups, but below the industry average with the young age-groups and with the lower income-groups. In *POWDER TOWN*, on the other hand, you have a story which appeals particularly to the young and to the poor.

FAVORABLE COMMENTS

"This looks exciting and has a swell story too."—38-year-old wife of bookkeeper in Boston.

"I like a lot of action—and I like criminal pictures of all kinds."—20-year-old paper peddler in Connelsville, Pa.

"Sabotage and FBI—there's excitement."—24-year-old chocolate mixer in cookie factory, Lowell, Mass.

"Lots of action and suspense."—15-year-old son of weaver in woolen mill, Lawrence, Mass.

"Sounds like a real thriller—and it's what is actually happening today."—38-year-old druggist in Cleveland.

"Excitement! Cops!"—17-year-old son of railroad engineer in Newark.

"Exciting—and also the love angle sounds very good."—24-year-old girl checker in mail order house, Chicago.

"He risks losing the girl he loves."—16-year-old daughter of grocer in Cincinnati.

UNFAVORABLE COMMENTS

"Lot of corny melodrama."—35-year-old rewrite man on New York newspaper.

"I think this must be a B picture."—Chief chemist, State Board of Health, Columbus, Ohio.

"A little too violent."—23-year-old female teacher in Arkansas.

SUMMARY AND APPRAISAL

The audience acceptance value of Vicki Baum's original story was found to be considerably above average at the time of our tests (November 16—December 9). But, since no member of the cast now ranks among the first hundred ticket-selling names, it is difficult to see how the picture can hold its own as an A, in spite of the strength of its basic story line. We must emphasize, however, that we have no definite data on this point, since our tests were confined to the story alone.

In view of the fact that the story of POWDER TOWN appeals so much more strongly to ticket-buyers in small towns than to those in big cities, it might be advisable to arrange a special release pattern for the picture on this basis. At the same time it must be stated that Victor McLaglen is somewhat stronger in big cities than in small towns, which tends to offset the story's bias in the opposite direction.

Princeton, December 17, 1941

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

THE FIGHTING LITTLES

REPORT 129

BACKGROUND

The purchase of Booth Tarkington's novel by RKO was announced on October 15. Four weeks later the Institute received instructions to determine its audience acceptance value, without reference to cast.

AUDIENCE ACCEPTANCE VALUE

This story falls high in the Second Class on the basis of our tests. It equals the same author's MAGNIFICENT AMBERSONS in audience acceptance value and emerges higher than Bellamy Partridge's recently tested BIG FAMILY.

<i>Acceptance</i>	<i>Average for All</i>	<i>Plus or Minus</i>
<i>%</i>	<i>Stories Tested</i>	<i>Compared with Average</i>
58	50	+16%

ANALYSIS BY AUDIENCE GROUPS

Age

Very strong both with adolescent and elderly ticket-buyers, but below average with the big 18-30 age-group.

Sex

Strong with females, average with males.

Economic

Most popular with the lower income levels, least popular with the prosperous.

Frequency

Relatively stronger with infrequent than with habitual theatergoers.

FAVORABLE COMMENTS

"Sounds like a story about just plain everyday people like me."—Salesgirl in dress shop, New Brunswick.

"I've read those stories in the Post and enjoyed them."—23-year-old home girl—father rental agent, St. Paul.

"To see the old man get burned up."—16-year-old son of mover, Lowell, Mass.

"There's teen-age children in it and that's a lot of fun."—13-year-old daughter of superintendent of apartment building, New York City.

"It's a good clean amusing type of show."—41-year-old wife of grocery clerk, Philadelphia.

"It's good relaxation after a hard day. It sounds like the Andy Hardy type which I like."—25-year-old woman demonstrator for gas company, Connelsville, Pa.

"I'd like to see if their family troubles would be the same as around here."—24-year-old farmer, West Liberty, Iowa.

"Much like my own life."—Mother of pinsetter in bowling alley, La Crosse, Wisconsin.

"It's about most families."—20-year-old son of accountant in coal office in Boston.

"I have children and have a hot temper I am trying to control. I would like to learn from this."—41-year-old City Health Dep't. employee, Yonkers.

"I'd just like to see another bunch of kids worse than mine."—42-year-old traveling salesman, Lexington, Ky.

"I might find out what to do with my father."—16-year-old daughter of bus driver, Vancouver, Wash.

"I'd like to see it because I'm kept kind of strict—my parents don't understand me."—17-year-old daughter of day-laborer for city, Rochester.

UNFAVORABLE COMMENTS

"Hell no! I mean if you want to see that you don't go to the movies. You just go next door."—31-year-old auto repair man, New Brunswick.

"Another double feature 'B' picture."—32-year-old office manager, publishing company, Chicago.

"Sounds a little too silly to me."—wife of navy-yard draftsman, Boston.

"It's too dumb."—36-year-old Brooklyn newsdealer.

"It's more of a kid show."—25-year-old farmer, rural Ohio.

"Too much like real family life—that hot temper fits me."—35-year-old man, owner of meat market, Meridian, Miss.

"It's too serious and sentimental."—37-year-old man, literary editorial worker, Queens.

"Mushy home life doesn't appeal to me."—21-year-old son of banker, New Braunfels, Texas.

"Sounds like a class B film. It looks like an attempt to imitate the Hardy family."—20-year-old son of insurance salesman, Birmingham, Ala.

"I like family pictures—but believe the Hardy's are enough of that kind."—36-year-old wife of U. S. Army Captain, Denver.

"I think it's a terrible title for such a story. It sounds like a western."—28-year-old plumber, New York City.

SUMMARY AND APPRAISAL

THE FIGHTING LITTLES emerges higher than any family story ever tested by the Institute with the single exception of LIFE WITH FATHER.

It is particularly strong with the younger age-groups and the lower income-groups, where so many recent RKO pictures have been weak.

The story emerges high in the Second Class, but it is probable that ticket-buyers will regard it as a B unless it is cast with a recognized marquee name.

The book was published October 17 but it has not yet appeared on the best-seller lists. Needless to say, its audience acceptance would be very considerably enhanced if it were to become a best-seller, or if it were to be serialized in newspapers.

Princeton, December 17, 1941

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

REPORT 130

ANGEL FACE

BACKGROUND

On November 14 the Institute received instructions to determine the audience acceptance value of ANGEL FACE, a story by Jean Becket, which appeared in the July 26 issue of the SATURDAY EVENING POST. There were no instructions as to cast.

AUDIENCE ACCEPTANCE VALUE

<i>Range</i> %	<i>Average for All</i> <i>Stories Tested</i> %	<i>Plus or Minus</i> <i>Compared with Average</i>
45 to 54	50	-10% to +8%

The first column—*range* in audience acceptance value—reflects the influence of changes in synopsis. In testing ANGEL FACE the Institute conducted two nationwide polls, using two different treatments. The first referred to Honesty Blake as a *little girl*, the second referred to her as a *teen-age* girl. In the first case ANGEL FACE emerged in Third Class with a vote of 45 per cent, while in the latter case ANGEL FACE emerged in Second Class with a vote of 54 per cent.

ANALYSIS BY AUDIENCE GROUPS

Age

The "teen-age" treatment received a very heavy vote from female ticket-buyers in the 12 to 17 age-group. On the other hand, the "little girl" treatment was most popular with elderly theatergoers, who looked upon Honesty as a cute, darling child. Both treatments were weak with the all-important 18 to 30 age-group.

Sex

ANGEL FACE is markedly stronger with females than with males.

Economic

No significant variation by income groups.

Size of Community

No significant variation.

FAVORABLE COMMENTS

"I like to see pictures about children my own age."—15-year-old son of machinist in Denver, Col.

"Yes. It's a comedy about a teen-aged girl—which includes my circle."—19-year-old college student in Des Moines.

"I sure would because I've read the story."—19-year-old telephone girl in Chicago.

"Sounds like a cute comedy—I enjoy little girls and their mischievous ways."—45-year-old wife of policeman in St. Joseph, Mo.

"It would take my mind off any worries or cares."—57-year-old real estate dealer in New York City.

"More of a child's picture—my little girl would like to go and I'd probably go with her."—42-year-old wife of laundry salesman in Birmingham, Ala.

"Somebody like Shirley Temple? I think it would be cute!"—46-year-old wife of gas station attendant in Philadelphia.

"I would see it on a double feature."—34-year-old wife of telephone wireman in Columbus, Ohio.

UNFAVORABLE COMMENTS

"It's just crummy—more for kids."—15-year-old son of a clerk in gas company, Philadelphia.

"Those cute kids give me a pain."—19-year-old elevator operator in Brooklyn.

"I don't like these here kid shows—they're so silly."—21-year-old service station attendant in Fairfield, Iowa.

"It's O. K. for kids but I wouldn't like it."—23-year-old dentist's assistant in New York City.

"What an awful picture—I don't care anything about this little girl stuff."—27-year-old salesgirl in dep't. store, Birmingham, Ala.

"Dopey," "Damned silly," "Stupid," "Gushy," "Dizzy," "Wishy washy," "Childish," "Far-fetched," "Junky."—Various respondents.

SUMMARY AND APPRAISAL

ANGEL FACE is stronger when the central character is a girl in her teens than when she is a child. Even then, however, the story is only just above average.

The weakness of this story is that, while it appeals strongly to young girls and middle-aged women, it is markedly weak with other segments of the audience—notably the all-important 18 to 30 age-group.

No tests have been made with cast.

Princeton, December 16, 1941